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# GERMANY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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## VOLUME IX/I

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German Wartime Society 1939–1945:  
Politicization, Disintegration, and  
the Struggle for Survival

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and the Struggle for Survival

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# Germany and the Second World War

Edited for the  
Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt  
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Potsdam, Germany  
by  
JÖRG ECHTERNKAMP

VOLUME IX/I

German Wartime Society 1939–1945: Politicization,  
Disintegration, and the Struggle for Survival

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# Abbreviations

A.	Amt: office
AA	Arbeitsamt, -ämter: labour office(s)
AA	Auswärtiges Amt: foreign affairs ministry
ABO	Armeebetreuungsoffizier(e): army welfare officer
Abt.	Abteilung: department, section, unit
a.D.	außer Dienst: retired
ADAP	<i>Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik</i> : Documents on German Foreign Policy (cf. <i>DGFP</i> )
ADB	<i>Alldeutsche Blätter</i> (journal of the Alldeutscher Verband)
ADC	aide-de-camp
Adj., Adju.	Adjutant(ur): adjutant, Adjutant's Office (of the OKW)
AdR	Archiv der Republik (Österreich): Austrian Republic Archive
AEG	Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft: General Electric Company
AEL	Arbeitserziehungslager: 'educational work camps'
AFHQ	Allied Forces Headquarters
AFSoc	<i>Armed Forces and Society</i>
AG	Aktiengesellschaft: joint stock company
AGN	Archiv der Gedenkstätte Neuengamme: Neuengamme Memorial Archives
AGS	Archiv der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen: Sachsenhausen Memorial Archives
AHA	Allgemeines Heeresamt: General Army Office
AHM	Allgemeine Heeres-Mitteilungen: general army news bulletins
AK	Armeekorps: army corps
AMA	Allgemeines Marinehauptamt: General Naval Directorate
Ang.	Angelegenheit(en): item(s) (in document, e.g. memo or minutes)
Anh.	Anhang: appendix
Anl.	Anlage(n): enclosure(s)
Anm.	Anmerkung(en): note(s)
AO, A.O.	Abwehroffizier: Abwehr (foreign intelligence) officer
Ao	Anordnung(en): directives(s), order(s)
AOK	Armeeoberkommando: army headquarters

APO	Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu: State Archives, Opole (Poland)
App.	appendix
AR	Artillerieregiment: artillery regiment
ArbSt	Arbeitsstab: working group
ArbSt LS	Arbeitsstab ziviler Luftschutz: civil defence working group
ARG	Arbeitseinsatz-, Reichstreuhänder- und Gewerbeaufsichtsverwaltung: labour, Reich trustee, and health and safety and working conditions administration
Art.	article
Art.	artillery
ASG	<i>Archiv für Sozialgeschichte</i>
Ass.	Assistent: assistant
Att.	attachment
Ausb.Abt.	Ausbildungsabteilung (des Generalstabes des Heeres): training department (of army general staff)
Ausl./Abw.	Amt Ausland/Abwehr: OKW Abwehr foreign intelligence office
a.v.	arbeitsverwendungsfähig; fit for labour duties
AWA	Akademisch-Wissenschaftliches Arbeitsamt: academic/scientific employment centre
AWA	Allgemeines Wehrmachtamt: General Wehrmacht Office (of OKW)
Az., Az	Aktenzeichen: file number
BA	Bundesarchiv: Federal Archives, Koblenz and/or Berlin
BA-MA	Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv: Federal Military Archives, Freiburg
BannF	Bannführer: Hitler Youth rank, commanding c.3,000 members
BA-ZNS	Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle, Kornelimünster: Federal Archives Central Reference Office
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDC	Berlin Document Centre
BdE	Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres: commander of replacement army
BDF	Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine: Federation of German Women's Organizations
BDM	Bund Deutscher Mädel: League of German Girls
BdO	Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei: commander of the Orpo (q.v.)

BDO	Bund Deutscher Offiziere: Association of German Officers
BdS	Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD: commander of security police and SD (q.v.)
Befh.	Befehlshaber: commander
Befh. rückw.	
H.Geb.	Befehlshaber des rückwärtigen Heeresgebietes: commander of army rear area troops
Bespr.Prot.	Besprechungsprotokoll: minutes of meeting
BfdVjPl	Beauftragter für den Vierjahresplan: Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan
Bg	Bekanntgabe(n): announcement(s)
BGH	Bundesgerichtshof: Federal Supreme Court
BgldLA	Burgenländisches Landesarchiv: Burgenland Regional Archives
BL	Blockleiter: block leader
BSSR	Belorusskaja Soveckaja Socialističeskaja Respublika (= Bélorussian Socialist Soviet Republic)
BwA	Buchenwald-Archiv: Buchenwald Archives
BZHS	<i>Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde</i>
CA	California
CA	Churchill Archives, Cambridge
CChIDK	Central'nye Chranenie i Izucenie Dokumental'nych Kollekcii (Centre for Document Storage and Research, Moscow)
CDJC	Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris
CdS	Head of security police and SD (q.v.)
CdZ	Chef(s) der Zivilverwaltung: head(s) of civil administration
CEH	<i>Central European History</i>
ChefdGenStdH	Chef des Generalstabes des Heeres: head of army general staff
ChefdGenStdLw	Chef des Generalstabes der Luftwaffe: head of Luftwaffe general staff
Chef HRüst	Chef der Heeresrüstung: head of army armaments
Chefs.	Chefsache: to be seen by senior officer only
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CO	Colorado
CO	carbon monoxide
CSDIC	Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre
CT	Connecticut
ChdDtPol	Chef der Deutschen Polizei: head of German police
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront: German Labour Front

DAW	Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke: German Armaments Works
DBO	Divisionsbetreuungsoffizier: divisional welfare officer
DC	District of Columbia
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik: German Democratic Republic
DDSt	Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin: WW2 military service records office
DESt	Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH
DFW	Deutsches Frauenwerk: German Organization of Women
Diss.	dissertation
Div.	division
DIZ	Dokumentations- und Informationszentrum Emslandlager
DJ	Deutsches Jungvolk (junior division of the Hitler Youth)
doc(s).	document(s)
DÖW	Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes: Document Archive of the Austrian Resistance
DVL	Deutsche Volksliste: German Ethnic List
DWH	Deutsches Wohnungshilfswerk: German housing assistance organization
ed., edn.	edited by, edition
<i>EHQ</i>	<i>European History Quarterly</i>
et al.	et alii (= and others)
e.V.	eingetragener Verein: registered association
<i>FAZ</i>	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
FHQ	Führer headquarters
Fig.	figure
FIR	Fédération Internationale des Résistants (= International Association of Resistance Fighters)
FK	Feldkommandantur: military administration HQ
FO, F.O.	Foreign Office
fo(s)	folio(s)
FPP	Feldpostprüfungsbericht: field post censor's report
Fr.	France, French
Frhr	Freiherr: baron
Fü.Abt., FüAbt	Führungsabteilung: operations department
FüSt, Füst	Führungsstab: operations staff
FZH	Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte (contemporary history research centre), Hamburg
g., g,	geheim: secret

GB	Great Britain
GBA	Generalbevollmächtigter, -beauftragter für den Arbeitseinsatz: general plenipotentiary for manpower
GB-Bau	Generalbevollmächtigter für die Regelung der Bauwirtschaft: general plenipotentiary for control of construction
GBI	Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt: general building inspector for the Reich capital
Geb.Div.	Gebirgsdivision: mountain division
Geb.Jäg.Rgt.	Gebirgsjäger-Regiment
geh.	geheim: secret
Gen.	General
Gen.Adm.	Generaladmiral: admiral (commanding a fleet)
GendPiuFest	General der Pioniere und Festungen: general of engineers and fortifications
Gen.Kdo(s).	Generalkommando(s): corps HQ(s)
GenQu	Generalquartiermeister: quartermaster general
GenSt.	Generalstab: general staff
GenStdH	Generalstab des Heeres: army general staff
Genst.d.Luftw.	Generalstab der Luftwaffe: Luftwaffe general staff
GenSt.Offz.	Generalstabsoffizier: officer serving on the general staff
Ges.	Gesandter: envoy
Gestapa	Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt: Gestapo office
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei: secret police
GFP	Geheime Feldpolizei: secret field police
GG	<i>Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
GH	<i>German History</i>
g.Kdos.	geheime Kommandosache: top secret (military)
GL	Gauleiter
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung: (approx.) limited company
GPL	Gaupropagandaleiter: head of Gau propaganda
GPU	Gosudarstvennoe Političeskoe Upravlenie (USSR political directorate, c.1923)
Gr.	Gruppe: group
g.Rs., gRs	geheime Reichssache: top secret (political)
GS	(serving on the) general staff
GSR	<i>German Studies Review</i>
GStA	Geheimes Preußisches Staatsarchiv (secret Prussian state archives), Berlin
GULag	Glavnoe upravlenie lagerej (USSR penal camps administration)
GWB	Gauwirtschaftsberater: Gau economic adviser

<i>GWU</i>	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
GZ	Zentralabteilung: central office (of army general staff)
H	Heer: army
HAStK	Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln: Cologne city historical archives
HdAkten	Handakten: files
H.Dv., HDv	Heeresdruckvorschrift: army manual
HE	high-explosive (bomb)
H.Geb.	Heeresgebiet: army area
H.Gr.	Heeresgruppe: army group
<i>HGS</i>	<i>Holocaust and Genocide Studies</i>
HIS	Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung: Hamburg Institute for Social Research
Hiwi	Hilfswillige(r): (foreign) volunteer auxiliary
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HJ	Hitlerjugend: Hitler Youth
HOKW	OKW headquarters
HPA	Heerespersonalamt: army personnel office
H.Q., HQ, Hq.	headquarters
HQu	headquarters
HR	Heeresrechtsabteilung: army legal department
Hrüst	Heeresrüstung(s-): army armament(s)
HSSPF	Höhere(r) SS- und Polizeiführer: senior SS and police leader
HStA	Hauptstaatsarchiv: main state archives
HWesAbt	Heerwesenabteilung: army affairs department in the army general staff
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich
ILA	Interministerieller Luftkriegsschädenausschuß: interministerial committee on bomb damage
IMT	International Military Tribunal
Inf.	infantry
Inf.Div., ID	infantry division
Ing.	Ingenieur: holder of an engineering degree
IR	infantry regiment
ISD	Internationaler Suchdienst des Roten Kreuzes (International Red Cross Tracing Service), Bad Arolsen
IT	Irving Trial
<i>IWK</i>	<i>Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz</i>
IWM	Imperial War Museum



IZRG	Institut für schleswig-holsteinische Zeit- und Regionalgeschichte an der Universität Flensburg
J	Abteilung Inland (des Allgemeinen Wehrmachtamtes): home affairs dept. of General Wehrmacht Office
<i>JbGO</i>	<i>Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
Jg.Div.	Jäger-Division: light infantry division
JM	Jungmädelsbund: junior branch of the BDM (q.v.)
<i>JMEH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern European History</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>JMilH</i>	<i>Journal of Military History</i>
<i>JRSUI</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal United Services Institute</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Strategic Studies</i>
KAL	Kreisamtsleiter: Kreis office head
Kav.Div.	Kavalleriedivision: cavalry division
KdF	‘Kraft durch Freude’: Strength through Joy organization
Kdo	Kommando: headquarters, command
Kdr., Kdre.	Kommandeur, Kommandeure: commander (function, not a rank)
KG	Kommandierender General: commanding general
KG	Kreisgericht: Kreis court
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti (= Committee for State Security, USSR)
KHGnO	Gnadenordnung für das Heer im Krieg und bei besonderem Einsatz: rules on amnesties for the army in wartime and on special operations
KL	Kreisleiter: Kreis leader
KL, K.L.	Konzentrationslager: concentration camp
KLv	Kinderlandverschickung: children’s evacuation scheme
Komm.Gen.	Kommandierender General: commanding general
Kripo	Kriminalpolizei: criminal police
KS	Kansas
KSSVO	Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung: order imposing special wartime criminal law
KStN	Kriegsstärkenachweis: wartime strength table
KStVO	Kriegsstrafverfahrensordnung: order imposing wartime criminal process
KTb	Kriegstagebuch: war diary
K.u.k.	Kaiserlich und königlich: imperial and royal (in Austrian history)

k.v.	kriegsverwendungsfähig: fit for performing war service
KV	Series Prefixes (PRO/National Archive, London)
KY	Kentucky
KZSSP	<i>Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie</i>
KZ	Konzentrationslager: concentration camp
L	Luftfahrt/Luftwaffe
LA	Landesarchiv: regional archive
LAA	Landesarbeitsamt, -ämter: regional labour office(s)
L.Dv.	Luftwaffendruckvorschrift: Luftwaffe regulations
LG	Landgericht: regional court
LHA	Landeshauptarchiv: regional main archive
LKA	Landeskriminalamt: regional criminal department
LoC	Library of Congress, Washington
LR	Landrat: chief administrative officer of a rural district
LS	Luftschutz: civil defence (CD), air-raid protection (ARP)
LTi	Lingua Tertii Imperii (= Language of the Third Reich, a term coined by Victor Klemperer)
Ltn., Lt.	Leutnant: lieutenant
LVBl.	Luftwaffen-Verordnungsblatt: air forces gazette
Lw., Lw, LW	Luftwaffe
LWA	Landeswohlfahrtsamt/Landeswohlfahrtsausschuß: regional welfare department/committee
LwFüSt,	
Lw.Fü.Stab	Luftwaffenführungsstab, Führungsstab der Luftwaffe: Luftwaffe operations staff
Maj.	Major
MBF, MilBefh	Militärbefehlshaber: military commander
MD	Maryland
Memo.	memorandum
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit: ministry for state security (of GDR)
MGB	Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti (= Ministry for State Security. USSR)
MGFA	Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Potsdam: Research Institute for Military History
MGM	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen</i>
MGZ	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift</i>
MIA	Missing in action
Min.Büro	Ministerialbüro: ministerial office
Min.Dirig.	Ministerialdirigent: civil service rank, <i>roughly</i> assistant secretary

MinRfdRV	Ministerrat für die Reichsverteidigung: ministerial council for Reich defence
<i>Mittelweg 36</i>	<i>Mittelweg 36</i> , journal of the Hamburg Institute for Social History
mot.	motorized
MPA	Marinepersonalamt: navy personnel office
Ms., Ms	manuscript
<i>MSg.</i>	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Sammlungen</i>
MStGB	Militärstrafgesetzbuch: military penal code
MStGO	Militärstraßgerichtsordnung: military court regulations
MVD	Ministerstvo vnutrennich del: ministry for internal affairs, USSR
n/a	not available, not applicable
NA	National Archives, Washington, DC
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
NC	North Carolina
NCO	non-commissioned officer
ND	Niederdonau (Lower Danube, Austrian administrative region)
<i>NEP</i>	<i>Novaja ékonomičeskaja politika</i> (= New Economic Policy)
NJ	New Jersey
NKFD	Nationalkomitee ‘Freies Deutschland’: National ‘Free Germany’ Committee
NKVD, NKWD	Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennich del (= People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, USSR)
NOKW	Nürnberger Dokument, OKW (OKW Nuremberg Documents) in Federal Archives, Koblenz and Potsdam
NÖLA	Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv: Lower Austria Regional Archives
<i>NPL</i>	<i>Neue Politische Literatur</i>
NS	Nationalsozialistisch: National Socialist
NSAhh	Nationalsozialistischer Altherrenbund: NS League of Former German Students
NS-AufhG	Gesetz zur Aufhebung nationalsozialistischer Unrechtsurteile in der Strafrechtspflege: Law setting aside unjust Nazi penal-code judgments
NSBDT	Nationalsozialistischer Bund Deutscher Technik: NS League of German Engineers
NSDÄB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztenbund: NS German Doctors’ Alliance

NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei: National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party)
NS-Dok	NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Köln: NS Documentation Centre of the City of Cologne
NSDozB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Dozentenbund: NS German Lecturers' Alliance
NSDStB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund: NS German Students' League
NSF	Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft: NS Women's Groups
NSFK	Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps: NS Air Corps
NSFO	Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier: NS political guidance officer
NSKK	Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps: NS Motor Corps
NSKOV	Nationalsozialistische Kriegsoferversorgung: NS Welfare for War Victims
NSLB	Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund: NS Teachers' Alliance
NSRB	Nationalsozialistischer Rechtswahrerbund: NS Bar Association
NSRKB, RKrB	Nationalsozialistischer Reichskriegerbund: NS Reich Ex-Servicemen's League
NSRL	Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen: NS Reich Gymnastics League
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt: NS People's Welfare
NV	Nevada
NY	New York
OB	Oberbefehlshaber: commander-in-chief
ObdH	Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres: C-in-C of the army
ObdL	Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe: C-in-C of the Luftwaffe
ObdM	Oberbefehlshaber der Marine: C-in-C of the navy
Oberstlt.	Oberstleutnant: lieutenant-colonel
ObKdo	Oberkommando: high command
ÖMZ	Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift
ÖZG	Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften
Oflag	Offizierlager: prisoner-of-war camp for officers
OH	Ohio
OHL	Oberste Heeresleitung: supreme army command
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres: army high command

OKL	Oberkommando der Luftwaffe: Luftwaffe high command
OKM	Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine: navy high command
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht: Wehrmacht high command
OL	Ortsgruppenleiter: local branch leader (of Nazi Party)
Op., Op, op.	Operation(s), operational
Op.Abt.	Operationsabteilung (des Generalstabes des Heeres): operations department in the army general staff
Oqu	Oberquartiermeister: deputy chief of the general staff
OR	Oregon
OT	Organisation Todt
OUN	Orhanizacij Ukraïns'kych Nacionalistiv (= Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists)
PA	Pennsylvania
PA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin: German foreign office political archives
PD	Polizeidirektor: police chief
Pers., Pers	Personal: personnel
Pg., Pg	Parteigenosse(n): member(s) of the NSDAP
PK	Parteikanzlei: Party chancellery
PK	Propagandakompanie(n): propaganda company
PL	Politischer Leiter: Party political leader
Politrुक	Polititscheskij rukovoditelj: Red Army commissar
<i>POQ</i>	<i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
Pref.	preface
PRO	Public Record Office, London (now The National Archives)
Prof.	Professor
PVS	<i>Politische Vierteljahresschrift</i>
Pz., Pz	Panzer: armoured (vehicle, regiment, army, etc.)
PzAOK	Panzer-Armeekommando: panzer army HQ
PzArmee	Panzerarmee: panzer army
Pz.Div.	Panzerdivision: panzer division
Pz.Gr.	Panzergruppe: panzer group
Pz.Gren.Div.	Panzergrenadierdivision: panzer-grenadier (=armoured infantry) division
<i>QFIAB</i>	<i>Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken</i>
Qu	Quartiermeister: quartermaster
QuAbt	Quartiermeisterabteilung: quartermaster department
RA	Rechtsanwalt: attorney-at-law (title)

RABl.	Reichsarbeitsblatt: RAD journal
RAD	Reichsarbeitsdienst: Reich labour service
RAF	Royal Air Force
R&R	Rest-and-Recreation
RBK	Reichsbevollmächtigter für den totalen Kriegseinsatz: Reich commissioner for total mobilization of resources for war (Goebbels)
RDB	Reichsbund der Deutschen Beamten: Reich League of German Civil Servants
RdL	Reichsminister, -ministerium der Luftfahrt: Reich aviation minister/try
Ref.	Referat, Referent: report, reporting officer
Rep.	report
repr.	reprint, reproduced
Res.	reserve
rev.	revised, revision
RFF	Reichsfrauenführung, -führerin: Reich women's leader(ship)
RFK	Reichsfilmkammer: Reich Film Chamber
RFSS	Reichsführer SS: Reich Leader SS (Himmler)
RGBl.	Reichsgesetzblatt: Reich law journal
Rgt.	regiment
RGVA	Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj voennyyj (= Russian State Military Archive)
RIAS	Cold War Radio In the American Sector of Berlin
<i>RIS</i>	<i>Review of International Studies</i>
RJF	Reichsjugendführung, -führer: Reich youth leader(ship)
RK, Rk	Reichskanzlei: Reich chancellery
RKF	Reichskommissar zur Festigung des deutschen Volkstums: Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Ethnicity
RKG	Reichskriegsgericht: Reich court martial
RKK	Reichskulturkammer: Reich Chamber of Culture
RKM	Reichskriegsminister, -ministerium: Reich war minister/try
RKPA	Reichskriminalpolizeiamt: Reich criminal police office
RLB	Reichsluftschutzbund: Reich air defence organization
RLM	Reichsluftfahrtminister, -ministerium: Reich aviation minister/try
RM	Reichsmark
RMEL	Reichminister, -ministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft: Reich minister/try for food and agriculture

RMF	Reichsminister, -ministerium der Finanzen: Reich finance minister/try
RMfBuM	Reichsminister, -ministerium für Bewaffung und Munition: Reich minister/try for armament and ammunition
RMfdbO	Reichsminister, -ministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete: Reich minister/try for the occupied eastern territories
RMfRuK, RMfRuKp	Reichsminister, -ministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion: Reich minister/try for armaments and war production
RMfVuP	Reichsminister, -ministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda: Reich minister/try for public enlightenment and propaganda
RFMI	Reichsminister, -ministerium des Innern: minister/try for the interior
RFMJ	Reichsminister, -ministerium der Justiz: Reich minister/try for justice
RNSt	Reichsnährstand: Reich Food Estate
ROL	Reichorganisationsleiter, -leitung: Reich organization leader(ship)
RPA	Rassepolitisches Amt: race policy office (of NSDAP)
RPL	Reichspropagandaleiter, -leitung: Reich propaganda leader(ship)
RR, Reg. Rat	Regierungsrat: senior civil service rank
RS	Rundschreiben: circular
Rs.	Reichssache:
RSchM	Reichsschatzmeister
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics (=Russia)
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt: Reich Security Main Office (of the SS)
RStGB	Reichsstrafgesetzbuch: Reich penal code
RStH	Reichsstatthalter: Reich governor
RTB, RTTrB	Reichstreubund ehemaliger Berufssoldaten: Reich League of Ex-Career Military
RuSHA	Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt: Race and Settlement Dept. (of the SS)
RVA	Reichsverteidigungsausschuß: Reich defence committee
RVK	Reichsverteidigungskommissar(iat): Reich defence commission(er)
SA	Sturmabteilung: stormtroopers (of the NSDAP)

SB	Situationsbericht(e): situation report(s)
SBM	Sajuz belaruskaj moldadzi (= Belorussian youth welfare)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst: SS security service
SDP	Steyr-Daimler-Puch
SEK	Sondereinsatzkommando: special operations unit
ser.	series
SFB	Sender Freies Berlin: 'Free Berlin' radio station
SG	Sondergericht: special court
SGB	Sammlung Gedenkstätte Buchenwald: Buchenwald Memorial collection
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
SHD	Sicherheits- und Hilfsdienst: Security Auxiliary Service
Sicherungstr.	Sicherungstruppe(n): security troops
Sipo	Sicherheitspolizei: security police
SK	Sonderkommando: special operations unit
SKL, Skl	Seekriegsleitung: navy war staff
SOPADE	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands in der Emigration: German Social Democratic Party in Exile
<i>SoWi</i>	<i>Sozialwissenschaftliche Information</i>
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SRD	Streifendienst: Hitler Youth patrols
SS	Schutzstaffel: elite Party troops ('guard detachment')
SSO	SS-Organisation
St., St.S., Staatssekr.	Staatssekretär: secretary of state, state secretary
StA	Staatsarchiv: state archives
StadtA	Stadtarchiv: city archives
Stalag	Stammlager: POW camp for NCOs and other ranks
StAnw	Staatsanwaltschaft: state attorney's office
Stapo	Staatspolizei: state police
StdF	Stellvertreter des Führers: deputy Führer
Stellv.	Stellvertreter: deputy
StGB	Strafgesetzbuch: penal code
StPO	Strafprozeßordnung: code of criminal procedure
Stv.GL	Stellvertretender Gauleiter: deputy Gauleiter
SZ	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>
TB	Tagesbefehl: order of the day
Tel.	telegram
Tgb.	Tagebuch: diary
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Society</i>



UdSSR	USSR
Uffz.	Unteroffizier:
uk	unabkömmlich: in reserved-occupation status
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UPA	Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armija (= Ukrainian rebel army)
US, U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
USAF	United States Air Force
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, Washington, DC
USSBS	United States Strategic Bombing Survey
VB	<i>Der Völkische Beobachter</i>
VCKVČK	Vserossijskaja Črezvyčajnaja Komissija po bor'be s kontrevoljuciej, sabotażem i spekulaciej (= All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Sabotage, and Speculators)
VDA	Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland: League of Expatriate Germans
VfZ	<i>Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte</i>
V.I.	confidential information
VL	Volksliste: Ethnic List
V.O.	Verbindungsoffizier: liaison officer
VOBl.	Verordnungsblatt: official gazette
vol., vols.	volume, volumes
Vorschr.	Vorschrift(en): regulation(s)
VSWG	<i>Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte</i>
VVO	Volksschädlings-Verordnung: ordinance on dealing with anti-national 'parasites'
WASSt	Wehrmachts-Auskunftsstelle: previous title of Deutsche Dienststelle
W.B., Wehrm.Befh. Wewia	Wehrmachtbefehlshaber: C-in-C of the Wehrmacht Wehrwissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft: Military Science Study Group
WFA	Wehrmachtführungsamt: OKW operations department
WFSt	Wehrmachtführungsstab: OKW operations staff
WFVA	Wehrmachtsfürsorge- und Versorgungsamt, -ämter: Wehrmacht welfare and maintenance department

WFVG	Wehrmachtfürsorge- und Versorgungsgesetz(e): Wehrmacht welfare and maintenance law(s)
Wg.F.	Wehrgeistige Führung: ideological education and morale support
WGG	Wachtturm-Gesellschaft, Selters, historical archive
WGnO	Wehrmachtgnadenordnung: Wehrmacht amnesties ordinance
WHW	Winterhilfswerk: winter relief organization
Wi	Wirtschaft: economy
WIFO	Wirtschaftliche Forschungsgesellschaft: economic research association
<i>WIH</i>	<i>War in History</i>
WK	Wehrkreis: military district
WPr	Abteilung für Wehrmachtpropaganda: Wehrmacht propaganda department
WPrO	Wehrmacht-Propaganda-Offizier(e): Wehrmacht propaganda officer(s)
WrStLA	Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv: Vienna city and regional archives
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung: Weimar constitution
<i>WS</i>	<i>War and Society</i> (Australia)
WStB	Wehrstammbuch: military service record book
WVHA	Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt: SS economic and administrative department
<i>WWR</i>	<i>Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau</i>
WZ	Wehrmacht-Zentralabteilung, -Zentralamt: Wehrmacht central office
YIVO	Institute for Jewish Research, New York
YVA	Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem
<i>ZfG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</i>
<i>ZGS</i>	<i>Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung</i>
ZL	Zellenleiter: cell leader
ZSt, ZSL	Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen, Ludwigsburg: Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes

# Glossary of Foreign Terms

<i>Altreich</i>	The 'Old Reich', Germany prior to the absorption of Austria (or, in context, prior to some other accession of territory)
<i>Einsatzgruppe</i> (pl. -en)	Units under the RSHA formed mainly from the SD, Sicherheits- and Ordnungspolizei, used in eastern/ south-eastern occupied Europe to liquidate Jews and 'lawbreakers'
<i>Freikorps</i>	Anti-Communist paramilitary organizations that formed in the first years of Weimar Germany among soldiers returning from defeat in the First World War
<i>Gau</i> (pl. -e)	Regional subdivision of the Nazi Party
<i>Gauleiter</i>	Regional Nazi Party leader
<i>Hoheitssträger</i>	Lit. 'bearer of sovereignty'; in accordance with the <i>Führerprinzip</i> , the official at each level in the Party hierarchy, from Gau through Kreis, local branch, cell, and block, vested with total responsibility for his area of sovereignty
<i>Kreisleiter</i>	District Nazi Party leader
<i>Kriegsmarine</i>	German navy
<i>Luftwaffe</i>	German air force
<i>Ministerialdirektor</i>	(approx.) undersecretary in a ministry
<i>Ministerialrat</i>	(approx) counsellor in a ministry
<i>Orpo</i> ( <i>Ordnungspolizei</i> )	Lit. 'Order police', the regular, uniformed law-enforcement police
<i>Regierungspräsident</i> <i>Sipo</i>	Senior official of an administrative district
( <i>Sicherheitspolizei</i> )	Lit. 'Security police', consisting of the <i>Kripo</i> (criminal investigation police) and <i>Gestapo</i> (secret state police)
<i>Volk</i> (adj. <i>völkisch</i> )	Lit. 'people' or 'nation'; the nationalistic, <i>völkisch</i> movement of the early years of the twentieth century presented the <i>Volk</i> as a mystical whole made up of the Aryan peoples of Germany. In the Nazi idiom it had connotations of racial purity in a society rooted in the German soil and bloodline
<i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>	'National community', the Nazi utopia of a racially pure, classless, and hierarchically organized society in

	which individual interests were surrendered to those of the nation
<i>Volksgenosse</i> (pl. -en)	‘National comrade’, a member of the <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>
<i>Volkssturm</i>	The German national militia of the closing months of the Third Reich; made up of members of the Hitler Youth, elderly men, and those previously classed as unfit for military service
<i>Waffen-SS</i>	The military arm and largest of the major branches of the SS
<i>Wehrmacht</i>	The German armed forces (army, navy, and air force, but not including the <i>Waffen-SS</i> )

# Foreword

THE years of the Third Reich during which the Nazi regime pursued its aims in a Second World War are far from having lost their significance for the political culture of today. Quite the opposite: so on the sixtieth anniversary of that war ending—a time when ‘those who were there’ are becoming fewer and fewer, and a new generation is asking its questions of the past—it is worthwhile to present an overall picture, summing up where research now stands, and widening its scope by both making use of modern methods and approaching the subject from the social, mentality, and cultural history angles. The Institute for Military History Research (MGFA, the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt*) is therefore including in its series on ‘Germany and the Second World War’ a two-part volume that takes as its central theme Germany’s ‘war society’ between 1939 and 1945.

The first volume in this series appeared twenty-five years ago, and was intended to lay the foundations for a modern approach to history-writing in Germany, one that would among other things place the military-operational and political-strategic aspects of the Second World War in their ideological, economic, and technological context. Over the years since then the work has, through its broad conception of what military history means, won worldwide recognition and has also inspired research in the universities. The goal set for the ten-volume series, as described by a leading historian of the time, Manfred Messerschmidt, was to describe the Second World War from the German viewpoint, as a ‘history of German society at war’. This wide-ranging approach was mirrored in the ‘military operations’ volumes that traced the sequence of events during the war; and it was planned to have two ‘cross-section’ volumes (V and IX) that would bring together the structural and analytical elements. The two-part Volume V, which has already appeared, accordingly dealt with such important aspects of German war society as the wartime economy and armaments effort, the management of manpower and replacement of the Wehrmacht’s personnel, and the administration of the occupied territories.

We now present Volume IX, the long-planned second of these two-part volumes. Its genesis has seen many difficulties and delays, due among other things to the staff upheavals that were an inevitable outcome of MGFA’s move from Freiburg to Potsdam in 1994. This volume provided the opportunity, as part of a fundamental shift in concept, to give thought to new methods to use, new angles to look at, and interdisciplinary ways of approaching the subject.

Cooperation between the MGFA’s military historians and a large number of mostly younger historians in Germany and other countries made it possible to tackle a wide range of topics. Quite a number of aspects still had to be left out, though some of these are the subject of long-term research projects the results of which can be presented in later publications. A contribution

by Manfred Messerschmidt on the subject of Wehrmacht justice, originally intended for Volume IX, is because of its considerable length to be published as a separate monograph.

The appearance of the present volume brings us a good deal closer to the completion of our work on the Second World War. Volume VIII, still to appear, will be a book in the classic mould on military operations, surveying the dramatic events on the eastern front in 1943/4, though it will also look at the question of inner cohesion among the 'front-line community'. The final Volume X, written from a variety of perspectives, brings the main focus back onto German society in the war. In 1945, as enemy troops entered Germany, the population felt the full force of the war on its own territory; for this reason too Volume IX must be seen in relation to the work as a whole.

Part-volumes IX/I and IX/II are the fruit of committed effort by a large number of collaborators. Representing them all is the editor Jörg Echternkamp, who took on the important task of planning and coordination, and who in his introductory chapters sets out the basic thinking behind and results seen in this work. And not least my thanks go to all my colleagues on MGFA's publications staff, who through their professional collaboration with the publisher have played a major part in bringing this work into being.

Dr Jörg Duppler  
*Captain, German Navy,*  
*Director of the Military History Research Institute*  
*(2001–2004)*

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# A. At War, Abroad and at Home

## The Essential Features of German Society in the Second World War

JÖRG ECHTERNKAMP

### I. 'War on Two Fronts'

PEACE at the front, war at home—this bizarre situation confronted a bemused 24-year-old Private Heinrich Böll on the western front when, in the summer of 1942, he learned that his wife Annemarie had been bombed-out in Cologne while he was kicking his heels in a bunker on the French Channel coast. 'This really is a quite fantastically strange war,' he wrote, 'we soldiers sit here almost as if it were peacetime, sunburnt and fit, while you at home are going hungry, and living through a most frightful war down in the cellar.'<sup>1</sup> When Böll arrived at the eastern front in October 1943—finally 'in a real fight, which is the proper place for a soldier to be', as he thought at first—there could no longer be any question of an idyllic military tourist's trip. He underwent his 'horrific baptism of fire' in the Crimea. These days of 'absolute danger, absolute terror' quickly quenched his curiosity about what life at the front was like and let him, as he wrote home, look back 'infinitely thankful' for the monotonous time he had spent on the Channel coast.<sup>2</sup> In eastern Europe 'total war' meant from the outset an often limitless violence that those in the *Altreich* came to know in a different form during the bombing war.

While war formed part of a quasi-religious official doctrine that pronounced the fight against enemies to be a permanent state of affairs, the actual armed conflict represented a gradual rather than fundamental, but certainly massive intrusion into people's social and political lives. But it took the war—which from the end of 1941 was the second *world* war—to reveal the core of National Socialism, abroad and at home. 'The nation has become a single fighting unit,' Hitler declared in a speech at the 'heroes day' (*Heldengedenktag*) celebration

<sup>1</sup> Böll, *Briefe*, i. 359 (5 June 1942), and similarly ii. 839 (12 Aug. 1943). For the critical examination of the manuscript my thanks go especially to Karola Fings, Winfried Heinemann, Karl-Heinz Frieser, Beatrice Heuser, Birthe Kundrus, Sven Oliver Müller, Armin Nolzen, Christoph A. Rass, Mark Spoerer, and Hans-Ulrich Thamer.

<sup>2</sup> Böll, *Briefe*, i. 543 (29 Nov. 1942) and ii. 954 (26 Nov. 1943), 958 (30 Nov. 1943).



on 16 March 1941.<sup>3</sup> For the Nazis it had always been about war: the civil war against the Communists and Social Democrats, the war against the Jewish population, but finally about the ideal of a new world war that was to burst the 'shackles of Versailles', reverse the outcome of the First World War, and bring about a new German Reich, if not indeed a whole new world. In September 1939, a few days after the start of the 'Polish campaign', there were the first signs of a war against Jews and Poles that revealed what was new and different about this war of conquest, subjugation, and extermination. The war served as a catalyst for genocide. The ideological basis for carrying out a 'race war' was provided by the fiction, legitimized scientifically as well by the modern teachings of hereditary and racial hygiene, of 'racial purity' and the notion of the superiority of the 'Germanic race' and 'related races' which, through progressive purification and the diluting-out of 'alien' (Jewish and Slavic) 'blood', had to be safeguarded for all time as the European 'master race'. During the war there came together in eastern Europe a blend of place, time, and opportunity that allowed 'ordinary' Germans to become mass murderers.

The external war was joined by the internal war against the minorities who were programmatically branded as 'enemies' of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, that community of Germans ordained by fate who were at the same time a 'brotherhood of arms and of blood'. As early as 1937 the Reichsführer-SS and head of the German police Heinrich Himmler had, in a speech to a select group of Wehrmacht commanders on the duties of the police in a war, made it clear that besides the land, sea, and air fronts there would be a 'fourth theatre of war': the 'Germany within'.<sup>4</sup> In this transferred sense, too, the Germans were soon waging a war on two fronts. There is furthermore the fact that as the war progressed the internal and external fronts did in fact merge, first through the air war, and then through the Allied advances when the military front lines moved to inside the *Altreich*, and the *Volkssturm*, that levy of children and old men, embodied in bizarre fashion and for a last time the idea of the national 'brotherhood of arms'.<sup>5</sup> Front and homeland: the difference in nature between these two terms was lost, and through the many intermeshing connections between them they took on a new meaning. Between 1939 and 1945 there was no doubt whatsoever that the civilians no longer stood apart from what was happening in the war—they were in the very middle of it, as actors, onlookers, and victims. From 1914 to 1918, on the other hand, the Germans had been largely spared the life-threatening experience of the war's events, and occupation by the enemy, if one leaves aside the Russian attack on East Prussia in August 1914 and the French invasion of Alsace.

<sup>3</sup> Führer's speech at the *Heldengedenktage* celebrations in the Zeughaus on 16 March 1941, in *Ewiges Deutschland*, 64–8, quotation 67. On the function of war in Hitler's 'programme', see *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 543–7.

<sup>4</sup> Himmler, 'Nature and tasks of the SS and police', quoted from IMT, xxix. 206–34, here 228. See Jürgen Förster in the present volume.

<sup>5</sup> See, for one, München, *Das Volk in der Wehrgemeinschaft*.

The war and its events brought about a lasting change to life in the Third Reich, and in doing so radicalized Nazi rule; the beginning of the war marks a clear turning point in Hitler's policy in the domestic sphere as well. The constitutional structure that had characterized the Führer state since 1933 altered, as Hitler through his desire for a war intensified his 'supranational personal rule'. The changes made among the top staff of the foreign ministry (AA, *Auswärtiges Amt*) and Wehrmacht, Hitler's assumption of supreme command, the ever-more-rapid takeover of control of the economy, the nationally-orchestrated pogrom against the Jews on the 'Night of Broken Glass', all showed an acceleration of pace. 'Euthanasia'—the murder of the severely handicapped, mentally ill, and 'asocial elements'—began in the Reich. As early as 30 January 1939 Hitler in the Reichstag had threatened the 'extermination of the Jewish race in Europe'.<sup>6</sup> That he was later to date this as 1 September 1939 underlines the significance ascribed to the start of the war in this connection. The radicalization of Nazi policy notched up at the same time the incessant dynamic that was designed to keep the *Volksgemeinschaft* a society locked in permanent struggle.

Given this prime role of war for the Nazi rulers and the population of the Reich, the questions posed and approaches taken by a historian's way of looking at the past promise a wider picture of the regime, one that can be considered either a military history of the years from 1939 to 1945 expanded to take in social and cultural history, or a social and cultural history of the Second World War. Either way, the same criterion as for all the various interpretative approaches to researching the Nazi era applies: they have to be judged by how far the results help towards providing a more accurate explanation of National Socialism.<sup>7</sup> So what follows is not least about getting to the bottom of the relationship that existed between society and National Socialism *during the war*.

When looking at everyday life during the war, this ideological dimension must not be lost to view. As oral history projects have shown, it is indeed typical of private memories of life in the Nazi period that a 'normality' predominates, going beyond any ideology, and that this outlived the Nazi society.<sup>8</sup> This was behind the plea for a 'historicizing' of National Socialism: to open up the everyday of life in the Third Reich, so as to be able better to fit the history of the Germans between 1933 and 1945 into German history, instead of seeing it as a kind of erratic block.<sup>9</sup> Of course this remembering covers most of all the peacetime years under the regime, which because of the contrast with the war years (and the period of occupation) will surely have stuck in the memory as

<sup>6</sup> Hitler's speech in the Reichstag on 30 Jan. 1939, repr. in *Deutsche Geschichte 1933–1945: Dokumente*, doc. 126, 163: 'If international Jewish finance ever managed to plunge the nations into world war, then the result would not be the Bolshevization of the Earth and with it the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'

<sup>7</sup> See Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Niehammar's *Die Jahre weiß man nicht, wo man die heute einsetzen soll* (Bonn, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Broszat, *Nach Hitler*, 167. On the problem see Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 218–36.

'the years when things were normal'.<sup>10</sup> Intensive and critical study of the social aspects of the Nazi period inevitably makes it just as impossible to ignore the ideological factors. On top of which there is the well-warranted warning that from historicizing to historicism is but a short step. The putting to work of forced labourers and concentration-camp prisoners in Germany shows, for instance, the extent to which Nazism's murderous atrocities became a common sight for the ordinary man-in-the-street.

Although the course to military defeat had been set since the winter battle before Moscow in 1941/2, and doubts were spreading about whether the looked-for 'final victory' would ever come, the war went on and it was not until May 1945 that the Wehrmacht capitulated and the Allies brought an end to the regime's rule. One of the central questions in the history of the Second World War remains why the Reich's German population held out against the Alliance's superiority for three more years, and how this massive mobilizing of forces on the home and external fronts was possible. The longer the front was held, the longer the wheels of the Auschwitz death-mills continued to grind—though the soldiers at the front were probably scarcely aware of the connection. Likewise, it is the unbroken will to carry on the fight and the unswerving faith in the Führer that continue to demand explanation—and less the day-to-day refusal to conform. How was it that German society, leaving aside the exceptions, made the war possible? Why did the regime, without which the war would not have been waged, enjoy support for so long? Setting aside the military, operational aspects (which are dealt with elsewhere in the *Germany and the Second World War* series), the problem can be looked at from two sides, so as to take account of the dynamic of the war's progress: what were the social and cultural conditions of the war? And, conversely, how did what was happening in the war affect German society?

The concept of society used here derives its specific determinant from the war. 'War society' places the accent less on the political or civic make-up of society than on what the transition from peace to war, and then the war itself, did to people in Germany, to the relations between them, and to social groups, and on the consequences this had for the further course of the war.<sup>11</sup> War is, in this respect, also a condition of society.<sup>12</sup> When 'war' and 'society' are here combined in a single term, this should work not least against the tendency conceptually to separate the two, as if 'war' too could be reified. When war *and* society are being discussed, thus where both aspects are being brought together, something of the substantial may indeed attach to war. And conversely society, seemingly taken in itself, may be brought face to face

<sup>10</sup> *Die Jahre weiß man nicht* (see n. 8 above).

<sup>11</sup> See, on the other hand, *Wie Kriege entstehen*.

<sup>12</sup> Reemtsma, 'Krieg ist ein Gesellschaftszustand'.

with the phenomenon of war. This quickly yields a basic pattern for national history in which society is—mostly with exculpatory intent—reduced to the role of object, where war (and indeed, 'total war') descended on one's own nation with the force of a stroke of fate.

Society describes an analytical category, and the historical 'reality'. What counts here is the realization that society too is at all times a social unit that has to be constructed and reconstructed. This is seen particularly clearly where it has, at great expense of effort, been organized as a people, nation, or *Volks-gemeinschaft*. Since the 1980s, historical nationalism research has developed this as theory, with empirical backing. German war society too was in this respect an 'imagined community' (Benedict Anderson), an 'intellectually constructed order' (Max Weber's *gedachte Ordnung*). A further central question is therefore concerned with the influence the course of the war had on society in this sense. What effects did experiences of the war have on the construction of national identity? The term 'experience' embraces the knowledge-guiding interest in the patterns of interpretation of those living at the time; it is not about the 'real history' repercussion of the war on the life of individuals.<sup>13</sup> How did they interpret the reality of their life during the war, and how did they act? How, conversely, were contemporaries—men and women—presented as a part of war society? How far did the utopia of the *Volksgemeinschaft* stretch? In short, what socializing results did war have?

A comprehensive, empirically validated social history of the war from 1939 to 1945 has yet to be written. It is however surely possible, in the light of debates in the various fields of research, to see a number of facets of war society more clearly than before. This makes an interim stocktaking within the framework of the present series worthwhile; indeed, it is time this was done. For taking our first bearings, we can start here by mapping out essential principles for a history of German war society, as these appear not least, but not only, in the chapters that follow. Some aspects, for instance the NDSAP's role in the war or forced labour, that are discussed at length in separate contributions, are dealt with more succinctly so that other topics such as social control, Wehrmacht justice, or the role of the sexes in the war that for various reasons are not given individual treatment can be given rather more space. Moreover the developments between 1939 and 1945 discussed here are (as the social-, political-, and cultural-history approach suggests) to be shifted into a longer-term perspective, as a rule to the 'end of the long 19th century' (to borrow Eric Hobsbawm's phrase) and in many places past the war's end; this is done not

<sup>13</sup> The concept of experience does not, anyway, describe a specific mental phenomenon. The historiographic use of the term lies rather more in guiding the analysis of the interdependence, in changing historical groupings, of 'reality', acting, and interpreting. See Koselleck, 'Erinnerungsschleusen'; Buschmann and Carl, 'Zugänge zur Erfahrungsgeschichte'.

least in order to set out the advantages and limits of a model that sees the years between 1914 and 1945 as the 'age of the world wars'.<sup>14</sup> This also lays down the thematic framework within which the individual contributions are set.

Against this background can be displayed, last but not least, the design of the volume, its all-embracing (and subsequently implicit) methodological and theoretical principles, and its resultant structure. A suitably brief glance over the research landscape is also given in these introductory chapters, in the firm belief that in the present series too a history of German war society can be given only in combination with its historiography—if only to combat the notion that in a publication this size knowledge of 'what really happened' could be both set down and retrievable. The main results reached by the individual contributors are presented in the introductions that precede the four parts making up this two-part Volume IX, and are designed to provide a link between them. Finally, therefore, a problem-oriented outline may serve here rather than a mere recital of facts.

<sup>14</sup> This matches the new line of research, given the programmatic title 'age of the world wars', being pursued in MGFA's research area FB II, 'Age of the World Wars'. It received a major stimulus from the 43rd International Conference on Military History held in Potsdam in 2001, and from the conference publication produced by Bruno Thöf and Hans-Erich Volkmann; see *Erster Weltkrieg—Zweiter Weltkrieg*; Thöf, 'Die Zeit der Weltkriege'.

## II. A Coherent War Society?

IN the Third Reich, approval of the system and of the war was to be ensured primarily by means of conviction and oppression. Conformity was to be guaranteed, and the majority of the population mobilized for the war, persuasively through propaganda and repressively through the terror apparatus. We must therefore begin by calling to mind the dominant notion of the racial community primed to fight (in the Nazi jargon, a *wehrhafte Volksgemeinschaft*) — a new image of the nation—and the interplay between propaganda and the public mood. Our main focus is then on ‘the central motor for integration, mobilization, and legitimation within the Nazi system of rule’<sup>1</sup>—the Führer myth. How this worked, how it grew, and how it collapsed are examined against the background of the course of the war. After that, we must look at social control, the power wielded by the secret police (the Gestapo), the cooperation given by the public (i.e. ‘self-policing’), and opposition to the regime.

The Nazi state was a phenomenon without precedent. At the heart of National Socialism lay the striving for ‘racial purity’, which found expression in a racial policy that is without parallel.<sup>2</sup> The ‘Thousand-Year Reich’ was the design for a supposedly perfect society in which the Jews, because of their alleged racial unworthiness, had no place—even though right up to 1945 it was still not clear exactly what was to be seen as a worthy race, and who had to be counted as a Jew.<sup>3</sup> This ‘social engineering’ project had to be carried out especially in the war, when there was no place for those unworthy of life such as the sick and handicapped.<sup>4</sup> In this one sees at the same time a general example of the link between utopia and force. The drawing of dividing lines is inherent in any utopian scheme; the harmony of a utopian society depends on its difference from those who pose a threat to that harmony. It is only utopian ideologies that unleash the kinds of destructive energy that

<sup>1</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 257.

<sup>2</sup> See Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*; on racial policy see also Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*.

<sup>3</sup> Essner, ‘*Nürnberger Gesetze*’, distinguishes between two irreconcilable strands of anti-Semitism. Those taking the ‘contagion’ view believed that once there had been ‘tainting’ with ‘Jewish blood’ through intercourse, all subsequent generations would be for ever Jewish; those espousing a ‘biological inheritance’ anti-Semitism, on the other hand, believed that the ‘Jewish genotype’ would become weakened with each ‘degree of hybridity’ so that it was possible to talk in terms of ‘half-Jewish’, ‘quarter-Jewish’, and ‘eighth-Jewish’. It must however be borne in mind that the varying interests of state and Party had their effect on Nazi anti-Semitic policy and thus on ‘racial’ classification, especially during the 1930s. See e.g. Adam, *Judenpolitik*; Kulka, ‘Die Nürnberger Rassengesetze’.

<sup>4</sup> Baumann, *Dialektik der Ordnung*, 81–2.

allow suffering to appear warranted during total war.<sup>5</sup> Those who talked about 'national comrades'—*Volksgenossen*—seldom failed to mention also those 'alien to the community'.<sup>6</sup>

While some wage war and impose the differentiation from the world outside, others guard the community's borders and organize rule within them—at all times in the name of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. However, this rule is not imposed. The relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled needs rather day by day to be in social practice negotiated, implemented, and presented in symbolic form.<sup>7</sup> What the political elite was offering needed to meet with readiness among those who were to be ruled to fulfil the expectations that had been expressed, and to look on what they were doing as obedience, where possible ahead of being told.

The term 'war society' should not in any way create the false impression of a state of harmony, which did not exist simply because of the war. An important propaganda function of the 'home front' metaphor was, rather, to foster the idea of a society that was homogeneous. What needs to be done, therefore, is not to stop at dealing with the dichotomy between an internal and external war front, but to go further and look at the dividing lines marking the heterogeneity or—to modify the metaphor—to look at the various 'home fronts'.<sup>8</sup> Looking at aspects of integration and disintegration, of inclusion and exclusion during the years 1939 to 1945, will it be assumed offer a further and relevant insight into the German war society.

### 1. THE UTOPIA OF A *VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT* AT ARMS

It was not only the ideological goals, but the war and immediate post-war period after 1945 as well that brought about a homogenizing tendency in society. What the National Socialist leadership was aiming at was not so much totally to change the objective way this society was ordered as to alter its subjective image of itself. Hitler's social utopia must consequently not be confused with a social programme.<sup>9</sup> The social orders postulated by a number of Party ideologues were in fact just as amorphous as the National Socialist movement itself, and Hitler's interest in the various social groupings extended mostly to how far they could serve the people's 'struggle for survival'. The code word that encapsulated the change in the way society saw itself, and with this its change in values, was 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). The equalizing effect of a nationalistic self-image was meant to make other loyalties—to social class, or religion, or region—fade into the background, and to fire the people with enthusiasm for the war.

*Völkisch* nationalism provided a central engine for integrating and mobilizing German war society, and from the psychological viewpoint must be

<sup>5</sup> See Bartov, 'Utopie'.

<sup>6</sup> Peukert, *Volksgenossen*.

<sup>7</sup> See the introduction by Alf Lüdtke to *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis*, 9–63.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten'.

<sup>9</sup> For an opposite view see Zitelmann, *Hitler*.



seen as a very influential predisposition. A fresh insight into the life stories, demographic make-up, and motives of individual perpetrators of the Holocaust reveals the lasting effect of an older nationalism going back to the First World War, one even stronger than anti-Semitism in influencing the wielding of power.<sup>10</sup>

Even those who were too young to have known the First World War as soldiers and who began their careers in the 1920s in the *völkisch*-nationalist climate of the universities were imbued with a similar world view; it guided what they did, and led them to become the 'core group in the genocide of the Jews':<sup>11</sup> lawyers, graduates in the liberal arts, doctors, and technocrats—those running the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), for instance, the majority of whom had been recruited from the generation that grew up during the First World War (i.e. who were born between 1900 and 1910), and who had risen from the lower middle class into the academic elite.<sup>12</sup>

A nationalist was not necessarily a supporter of Nazi ideology; it was rather that nationalism absorbed the contrariety that determined a widely held view of National Socialism. It was possible in the name of the people and the fatherland to reject the regime, and yet still allow oneself to be fascinated by its successes. To that extent, even an 'opponent' of the National Socialist regime could identify with its foreign policy achievements. That the affront to national feelings from the Versailles treaty could be assuaged by its revision gladdened the hearts not only of the National Socialists but of nationalists as well. The sociologists in America analysing this phenomenon during the Second World War were quite right: the surge of 'chauvinism' (as they called it) that followed the collapse of the Kaiser's empire in 1918 played a very large part in the rise of National Socialism.<sup>13</sup>

A report from 1940 from Thuringia summed this up by saying that the German people's deep-rooted hostility to the Versailles treaty '[was] now working to the benefit of Nazi propaganda'.<sup>14</sup> So while the women textile workers of Gera might not know which of their troubles could actually be ascribed to the provisions of the treaty, they certainly did remember that there had been protests against these back in the Weimar days. It would be wrong, however, to assume from this that the Versailles treaty had, through its harshness, inflamed the public mood. In fact, it was rather the opposite. Whether Versailles was, in comparison with other peace treaties of the nineteenth and

<sup>10</sup> See the contribution by Sven Oliver Müller in volume ix/II. On the continuity of the 'Ideas from 1914', of the utopia of a national socialism after 1918, see Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft*; Mann, 'Were the Perpetrators of Genocide "Ordinary Men" or "Real Nazis"?'

<sup>11</sup> Herbert, 'Vernichtungspolitik', 42.

<sup>12</sup> See Wildt, *Generation der Unbedingten; Vorurteil und Rassenhaß*.

<sup>13</sup> 'Memorandum on the Elimination of German Chauvinism', prep. by the Institute of Social Research (Columbia University) New York City, August 1942, 1, NARA, Record Group 59, Box 203. This showed the historical parallel with the nationalism that followed the defeat of Prussia in 1805; and drew the conclusion that the democratic states must prevent the reappearance of such movements when the current war was over.

<sup>14</sup> *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade)*, 7 (1940), 107.



twentieth centuries (the Paris treaty of 1871 in particular), substantially more oppressive is open to dispute. Yet an already radicalized nationalistic mood at the end of the Great War, which became increasingly widespread with the rapid growth of mass democracy after 1919, lent the Paris treaties their real explosive potential.<sup>15</sup>

The 'all in it together' idea behind the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a fighting community was consequently evoked from the very first days of the war, such as when Hermann Göring, a few days after the attack on Poland, made an appeal to the workforce at the Rheinmetall-Borsig works in Berlin: 'I call on you,' he said, 'every man, every woman, young men and young women. We are all of us fighting on the front line!' It was not a particular group or class that was being attacked, it was 'a war against the whole German people'.<sup>16</sup> The workers became soldiers, and the soldiers workers. Belief in the Führer, and in the necessity of the nation's battle, were to lead to a self-mobilization that—going beyond the boundaries of sex, religion, class, and generation—committed the whole of society to a social-cum-Darwinian contest and made possible a powerful pouring of effort into waging the war, even without an all-embracing use of terror. The ideal of the soldier on the front line, cultivated ever since the First World War, could be updated to serve the purpose. In the same vein was the 'keep fighting' exhortation to the front in the final year of the war: 'the [enemy's] aim is to destroy our nation. In this fight for existence, we either win, or are doomed.' This basic idea was, for instance, to be impressed on their troops by commanders in the South Ukraine Army Group in 1944; the message this gave could only be that 'every soldier's duty is to pour his whole being fanatically into achieving our victory'.<sup>17</sup> The western Allies, too, saw the unbroken German will to fight as stemming from this nationalist feeling; Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) referred to the Germans' firm belief that unconditional surrender would mean the beginning not only of the total destruction of Germany, but of their 'elimination as a nation'.<sup>18</sup>

While the young in particular saw in the national baptism of fire a test of their personal worth, one that at the same time offered them an undreamt-of opportunity for advancement, their elders were motivated more by the fear that

<sup>15</sup> See Mommsen, 'Der Vertrag von Versailles', 359.

<sup>16</sup> Hermann Göring, speech at the Rheinmetall-Borsig-Werke, Berlin, 9 Sept. 1939, repr. in *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, 271. 'Either Germany lives and all of us live with it, or it dies and with it dies every single one of us, wherever he stands.' With the legend of the 'stab in the back' in mind, Göring swore the workers to steadfastness: 'I call on all those who remain at home; just as the front line stands firm, with a will of iron and sense of duty, so too does the homeland, and will not let the front line put it to shame. It stiffens the backbone of the front, rather than break it. As the front line stands firm, it must know that behind it stands a homeland ready to give all, to give whatever may be asked, to make easier the fighting men's frightful work [*sic*] against the enemy, and against death. So there are two kinds of soldier today—those who hold a gun, and those who tend a machine. You are all fighting in the front line! The only difference is where the Führer has posted you.'

<sup>17</sup> OB HGr Südukraine, Generaloberst Schörner, special order No. 12/44 of 18 June 1944, *re* Midsummer 1944, copy, BA-MA RH 15/333, 22.

<sup>18</sup> PRO/FO 371/46791.

their fatherland was in danger, and by feeling sure that the Greater German Reich had to defend its position of power. The collective *will* to prevail forms the central element of a wide-ranging waging of the war that mobilized society. Ideological pervasion therefore aimed at instilling the right attitude to the war as the *sine qua non* for total war and totalitarian rule. This raises the question of how war was seen at the time.<sup>19</sup> In the circumstances that prevailed in the immediate post-war period after 1918<sup>20</sup> there had, despite the initial anti-war mood, been a 'civilian militarization'.<sup>21</sup>

Revolution, civil war, and inflation had brought about a nationalistically exaggerated memory of what the war had been like. On the one hand there were the soldiers who had been in the front line; as the embodiment of a radical nationalism they aestheticized and embellished, in popular literature about battlefield exploits, a violence that however—and this must be kept in mind against a renewed mythologizing of the First World War—had origins further back in the tradition of violence of the Kaiser's empire, and had been more recently rekindled in the battles of the *Freikorps* (in the Baltic countries especially); this had had a brutalizing effect on the veterans involved.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, however, there was the broad mass of those unhappy remembering the effect of the violence of arms, who were tired of war and immune—if not indeed allergic—to bellicose rhetoric, and who wanted a 'war against war'; this was the title of a book of photographs in which the anti-militarist Ernst Friedrich in 1924 shocked the public with images of the severely wounded missing a nose, mouth, or chin.<sup>23</sup> This tiredness of and lack of enthusiasm for war lasted for twenty years, well into the National Socialist period. Most of the German population consequently still found themselves in 1939 caught between a 'fear of war and hopes for peace'.<sup>24</sup> The fact that older men, those who had been in the First World War, were apparently called up sooner than young men eligible for service caused early discontent, as did the fact that many Nazi Party officials were initially classed as in a reserved occupation ('uk', *unabkömmlich*). This sour mood was evident to the military as well. In early October 1939, for instance, Generaloberst Ritter von Leeb reported to the army's commander-in-chief Generaloberst Walther von Brauchitsch a 'bad mood among the population, no kind of enthusiasm, no flags flying on the houses, everyone looking for peace. The people feel war is unnecessary.'<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> How much war and the conduct of war change over history through their cultural make-up is demonstrated by Keegan, *A History of Warfare*.

<sup>20</sup> See *Kriegsende 1918; Krieg im Frieden*; Ziemann, 'Das Fronterlebnis'; *Versailles 1919*.

<sup>21</sup> Mommsen, 'Militär und zivile Militarisierung'.

<sup>22</sup> See *Violence and Society*; also Schumann, 'Gewalt als Grenzüberschreitung'.

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich, *War against War!*

<sup>24</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 119–24. Organized pacifism however remained in the Weimar Republic a resisted 'foreign body': see Riesenberger, *Geschichte der Friedensbewegung in Deutschland*, 255.

<sup>25</sup> Generaloberst Ritter von Leeb on the war situation, 3 Oct. 1939, quoted from *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, ii. 18. See also Benz, 'Freude am Krieg'. On the NSDAP see the statistics quoted by Armin Nolzen in the present volume.

A quick glance at one attempt in Wehrmacht circles to find an explanation for this demonstrates the main interpretations and reasoning adopted. Where the lack of enthusiasm was concerned, some in the OKH (the army high command) were ready with an explanation that bore no risk of spoiling the timeless image of German soldiership, always ready to do battle. The historical experience of 'total war' had a role, they said, though not the only one. The 1939 generation of soldiers knew what the 1914 generation had had hardly any idea of—what 'the idea of total war' meant. As Max Simoneit, scientific head of the OKH's aptitude research inspectorate, saw the matter, the necessary primacy of policy and the dependence of the economy's military strength on a high level of technical development were such that 'the soldierly attitude [had to] come more from the head than from the heart'. The image of the warrior charging forward consequently no longer fitted the new, rational concept of warfare. Moreover the experience that despite all the heroic effort it had been impossible to avoid national humiliation had, even among German soldiers, led to a tendency to 'think about it' that had dampened any fresh enthusiasm for war. And anyway, so a third argument ran, total war ruled out an uncoordinated flood of volunteers to join the ranks, since during a mobilization this could jeopardize everyday working continuing as normally as possible. A fourth and positive reason Simoneit found for the lack of emotional upsurge was that the young had internalized the Prussian ideal of duty, with its dominant themes of obedience, sacrifice, work, and fighting; for them, therefore, joy was 'an internal condition'. Finally, the OKH in its search for explanations for the absence of war euphoria that would not detract from the ideal of the German military spirit also fell back on racial stereotypes. 'The basic attitude to life of the "northern races", part of their constitutional make-up', could not be compared with the 'ebullience of the southern peoples, resistant to any and every fate. Keen-sighted and thoughtful, the northern eye sweeps the northern plains and lakes that instil a serious and melancholic mood.' Thus an initial weariness with war was reinterpreted as seriousness dictated by both history and genes, which gave no cause for doubting the fighting spirit of German soldiers in 1939. Even more: the reticence became a sign of determination. The strength that in 1914 had been thanks to a 'youthful lust for life' (!) now 'flowed deep and steady from the tragic disappointment of a heart inured to pain yet still resolved'.<sup>26</sup>

The lack of keenness for war highlights the paradox that most Germans who fought the war to the bitter end had really wanted to avoid it. Here one is right in pointing to the difference from the events of August 1914, even though the assumption that there was a universal festive mood on the outbreak of the First World War is no longer tenable.<sup>27</sup> Yet had not the soberness born of a surfeit of experience, the comparatively indifferent or indeed sceptical

<sup>26</sup> Simoneit, *Deutsches Soldatentum*, 25–32. On the fiction of 'German soldiership' see *ibid.* 5–6, and on the spirit of 1914 see 7–20.

<sup>27</sup> This contrast is indeed also made at the start of *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 11.

reaction to the war having started, at the same time lessened the imbalance between expectations and experience, and thus stabilized war society? This would mean that the Germans carried on fighting for so long not despite but because of the absence of any war euphoria. It would be short of the mark, too, to conclude from the lack of enthusiasm for the war in September 1939 that the Germans had a fundamentally negative attitude to it. For all the fear there was of a war, most of them were quite ready to fight if it came to it. To take only one example, one critical observer listening to conversation in a bar in the Tiergarten district of Berlin between young men who had had their pre-call-up medicals gained the impression that though each of them hoped, by choosing what he felt to be the most congenial branch of the services, to have as easy a time as he could, 'it cannot be said that people [were] basically against the war'.<sup>28</sup> There was probably the most widespread consensus in Europe that it was everyone's duty to fight for his country.

The more a person cannot avoid experience of war, the greater the urge to seek temporary solace in the private refuge of peaceableness. The regime therefore relied on making war seem everyday and commonplace through a culture of war that at the same time would reinforce the feeling of togetherness. The *Volksgemeinschaft* was therefore worked on via radio entertainment programmes the nature of whose content merged with the political. In the same way as the regime's racially differentiated welfare provisions such as the *Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind* (Help to Mother and Child), the *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV: Children's Evacuation Scheme), and the *Winterhilfswerk* (Winter Aid),<sup>29</sup> the theatre, cinema, radio, and even television<sup>30</sup> at times blocked out wartime everyday concerns for a while. Despite 'total war', a great many of those working in the arts were exempted from war work or military service. As a rule more than a thousand of the 'gifted' were however subject to conscription to the extent that the artists' war service office (*Künstler-Kriegseinsatzstelle*)—headed by Goebbels as president of the Reich chamber of culture—directed their artistic activities. Artists working for the war included the conductors Wilhelm Furtwängler, Karl Böhm, and Herbert von Karajan, in the theatre Lina Carstens, Heinrich George, and Gustaf Gründgens, and in the cinema the actors Paul Dahlke, Willy Fritsch, Johannes Heesters, Viktor de Kowa, Theo Lingen, Hans Moser, and Heinz Rühmann. Those enjoying a special position among writers included Hans Carossa, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Ina Seidel, and in the music world the composers Richard Strauss and Hans Pfitzner.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade)*, 7 (1940), 98.

<sup>29</sup> For the 1930s see Hammerschmidt, *Die Wohlfahrtsverbände*, esp. 135–52. Hammerschmidt shows that there were no welfare ideas originating with National Socialism—it was rather that experts in welfare matters were able to put their ideas into effect with the help of National Socialism. On the KLV see Kock, 'Der Führer'.

<sup>30</sup> Murmann, *Komödianten*; Fulks, *Musiktheater*; Bussemer, *Propaganda*; Witte, *Lachende Erben*; Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich*; Radio im Nationalsozialismus; Zeutschner, *Die braune Mattscheibe*. See Birthe Kundrus in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>31</sup> See the extract from the 'list of the gifted' in Rathkolb, *Führertreu*, 176–78.

Entertainment, the radio in particular, was not only a means for the regime to distract people with its propaganda, but also gave listeners many opportunities for sharing in what the regime had to offer. This applied not only to the many employees, but also to listeners' correspondence. Request programmes in particular made it possible to generate an 'us-ness' among the public in the *Altreich* and at the front that could translate as a sense of popular unity. If, for instance, an army company gave direct help via its donations to soldiers' mothers and war widows, then the sense of belonging was palpable. During the 'request concert for the Wehrmacht' broadcast from 1 October 1939 until 1942, which in the war brought front and homeland together in a national family created by the media, the donors and the beneficiaries were even to be made known to each other at a personal level.<sup>32</sup> After the first concert the station received 23,000 field post-office cards and letters with requests for music, news, and greetings. Soldiers from Potsdam asked to hear the bells of the garrison church.<sup>33</sup>

The promise of *Volksgemeinschaft* undoubtedly exerted a strong ideological egalitarian pressure on social formations dating from the days of the Kaiser. Millions of people, especially those of the younger generation, felt the rise of National Socialism and the first years of the war as an awakening of a levelled order of society that did not seem to be rent by class antagonisms. There were thus genuine 'historic' moments during the first half of the war that made it possible to look beyond many differences, and that for a while nurtured the impression of a *Volksgemeinschaft* that transcended class and social environment. The rapid victories in Poland and France, most of all, gave rise to a feeling of national togetherness among the Germans that for a short while united them all as a war society.

The myth of the 'society of comrades in arms' had been born on the battlefields, and to there it returned. Experiences in the front line, most of all companionship that with death a constant danger knew no divisions along lines of social background, strengthened the feelings of everyone being equal. Where on top of that the market—through the state's politically based essays at manipulation—lost its power as a motor of social divisions, classes based on inheritance, or occupation, or possessions also lost their importance. To that extent what was observed matched not only a generally planned goal, but also an actual social development. Where food was rationed for everyone, where everyone suffered alike from a limited supply of consumer goods, where all without distinction found themselves among the bombed-out, the war drastically limited the opportunities for making social distinctions.

For the regime it was not social policy but pseudo-egalitarian propaganda that provided the major instrument of social levelling. Anyone who, from the myth of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, believes in the social reality is being taken in

<sup>32</sup> See Pater, 'Rundfunkangebote', 224–39; Koch, *Das Wunschkonzert*.

<sup>33</sup> Murmann, *Komödianten*, 138–9.

by it.<sup>34</sup> This is shown by a critical examination of the continuity of the social structure. True, the war did make it possible for some technocrats to rise in society. True, it led to an opening-up of the officer corps of the Wehrmacht; as the war became fiercer, an officer's professionalism and 'authority of the leader' became more important than an *esprit de corps* based on traditional ideas of rank. For this reason the professional nature of the military elite was fundamentally changed by a new personnel policy. The social opening-up, which drastically reduced the proportion of scions of noble families and ex-grammar school boys among the officer cadets, made a career as an officer more attractive for those from the lower classes as well. From their ranks came the young officers loyal to and believing in the Führer whose fighting morale remained unbroken to the end, even through pointless last-ditch campaigns. By 1945 Germany's younger officer corps, at least, had changed into a socially mixed and politically indoctrinated occupational class that bore little resemblance to the profession of the 1930s.<sup>35</sup>

Yet at base the traditional elite survived the war unscathed alongside the new, political one. In big business and industry, the bureaucracy, and the senior officer corps the same social classes dominated as had before 1933. Up to 1942 the middle class, too, remained relatively unaffected by what was going on, and the changes were—just as in other countries—the result of the boom in industry or of a rapid development of capitalist society. The number of businesses in the crafts and retail trade, for instance, fell slightly while that of salaried employees rose, and among country landowners too there was no renewal in spite of the *Reichserbhofgesetz* (Reich farm inheritance law). Direct results for the social structure were to come about far more from the evacuations and symptoms of disintegration due to the war.

Besides, the capacity for persistence of subjective views and value systems was apparent. There were still feelings of social inequality and dissatisfaction with day-to-day life, and even among the (older) industrial workers a merging of the classes was largely out of the question—though still not to an extent enough to have led to a renewed collective revolt. The officer corps, too, knew where to draw the social lines, as may be seen from the 'insensitive billeting' of a division in Mannheim early in 1945. The men of one battalion were, as one of them wrote in his diary, forced to give up their good quarters "because no officer can lodge with a worker's family", the billeting officer said—and that in the fifth year of the war! That this behaviour was judged against the yardstick of the ideal of the community-in-arms propagated for years past is underlined by the comment: 'That shows how far we still are from the social German people's state that was preached to us as a aim of the war!'<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Winkler, 'Vom Mythos der Volksgemeinschaft', 490; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* (1993), 174–5; on what follows see Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iv.

<sup>35</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I and v/II (chapters by Kroener).

<sup>36</sup> Dr Julius Dufner, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1971', ii: 1944–45, BA-MA MSg 2/2697, 79. A further inner divide in the minds of soldiers came from the attitude of the active, front-line troops. One soldier sent to a hospital in southern Germany from the eastern front, for instance,



The extent to which the National Socialists influenced people's minds and thus set up the basic conditions for the war society is, by no means least, a matter of generation. Most likely to be shaped in their attitude to the war were the young, including young workers, who had grown up during the Nazi period. The young had least quarrel with mobilization in the name of the egalitarian *Volksgemeinschaft*. In fact, however, there were even here signs of a readiness for conflict in the late 1930s, and this grew during the war years. Though one should not overestimate the importance of the nonconformist behaviour of this 'youth opposition'; the limits to self-mobilization here become particularly clear.<sup>37</sup>

The reality of a classless *Volksgemeinschaft* was not an essential condition for a community at war, egalitarian in line with what was claimed for it, to arise after 1939. Yet the war did not have only a levelling effect; it drove new chasms of inequality through the war society. The events of the war were very far from affecting all Germans to the same degree. War societies are, it is true, 'societies in a state of emergency'.<sup>38</sup> Yet they also offer islands of calm; in the lowlands, for example, or in small towns daily life went on as usual, whereas in industrial regions and in the centre of big cities—though seldom in the suburbs—the bombing brought a radical change to everyday existence. So inside the *Altreich* there was a simultaneity of war and 'peace' that did not fail to strike those living at the time and experiencing it. To take one example, in the middle of the war, in May 1940, members of the Westphalia pharmacists' association enjoyed an excursion to Bad Meinberg to visit a holiday home for mothers run by the *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV, National Socialist People's Welfare Organization). There they spent, as the editor of the *Münstersche Zeitung* reported, 'three wonderful days that had absolutely nothing to do with the war . . . it was total paradise. One just could not grasp that somewhere in the world there was a war going on.'<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the regional variation, this life-or-death question was decided by whether or not a man was called up or was classified as in a reserved occupation and could carry on working in his firm as an expert of some kind. But even military service was not the same for everyone. As also quickly got talked about among others besides the troops, war on the eastern front was a

was incensed at seeing 'how here in Badenweiler there are senile old generals and officers "in need of rest" wandering round who've never been near the front and are lovingly nursing their touch of bronchitis. A couple of us officers from the front moan like mad. The fellows from the Luftwaffe especially have the most hair-raising tales of corruption and scandals to tell . . . Back home, it seems to me, everyone has by and large realized what "total war" means—all except the Wehrmacht. It seems to us front-line soldiers that there are a lot more whom Himmler needs to put up against a wall.' War diary of Fritz Hockenjos, v: 1939–47, 18 Nov. 1944, BA-MA MSg 2/4038.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. Rempel, *Hitler's Children*.

<sup>38</sup> See Gerd Krumeich's 'Einführende Bemerkungen', in *Erster Weltkrieg – Zweiter Weltkrieg*, 369–73, quotation on 373.

<sup>39</sup> Wantzen, *Das Leben im Krieg*, 98–9 (30 May 1940).

different matter from spending time back at base or in the west, which continued to have something of a foreign travel adventure about it.

The air war at 'home' on the one hand fostered the integrating image of people bound by a common fate; but on the other this quickly began to fall apart when those who had been bombed out became aware that it was seldom or never happening to others. When, for instance, the German capital was bombed in January 1943 there was at Krefeld in the Rhineland, as an American observer noted, universal and 'especially great satisfaction that the loud-mouthed Berliners have at last got it again'. In the Rhineland and Ruhr people felt they were being treated unfairly, since air raids on Cologne or Düsseldorf did not seem to matter so much in the eyes of the Nazi leadership; at least, there were not reprisal attacks as quickly as after a raid on the capital. A great many Rhinelanders believed they were already being written off.<sup>40</sup>

And yet—others were being written off. Far more than the differing experiences of the war it was the German war community that was forging its own differences. A community defines membership through exclusion. In a continuous process of socialization harmony is created inwardly, while where the outside world is concerned those not counted among those who believe they belong together are in shrill tones rejected or ejected. Cooperation and conflict are two sides of the same coin. In the world view of such a community there are only two groups—the goodies and the baddies, the civilized and the barbarians; a difference that since ancient times has been able to be drawn in a variety of ways, yet always with a conflicting set of values. Such black-and-white thinking is as unsophisticated as it is radical. Where the community ceases, morality ceases. Where the others are not 'proper' people, but are seen as inferior, subhuman—*Untermenschen*—there is nothing to stand in the way of persecution and terror.<sup>41</sup> This ideology always underlay the specific meaning given to the war in Nazi eyes: the legitimizing and mobilizing concept of a final racial battle that had been forced upon the 'Aryan' peoples.

Between 1939 and 1945 the divisions became increasingly clear between a majority of wartime society and a minority who were affected by the Nazi regime and the war in a quite different way that threatened their very existence. Certainly there had been rifts in the home front between 1914 and 1918, too: individual groups of people had been more or less openly marginalized as 'war profiteers'—black marketeers, arms manufacturers, Jews, or sections of the rural population. But between 1939 and 1945 it was less a matter of the majority being separate from a small number of people who were profiting from the war, such as the 'Party bigwigs'. Far more serious, because it was insuperable, was the older divide through racist classifications. The 'Aryan'

<sup>40</sup> USSBS, iv. 18.

<sup>41</sup> See the conclusion by Beatrice Heuser and Anja V. Hartmann in the anthology *War, Peace and World Orders*, 237–51.



majority defined themselves more and more sharply through their contrast in worth with the 'others'—the supposedly racially alien 'Jews', 'gypsies', and 'negroes'—and with the 'asocials' and the political enemies of National Socialism. Those who had not been deported or murdered had to face discrimination and extreme restrictions in their daily life.<sup>42</sup>

This difference between majority and minority put its stamp on the differing realities of people's experience. It mirrored the racist, criminal basis of Nazi rule. The home front had not just a geographical but also a racial and political dimension. This gulf did not run haphazardly through the internal theatre of war, but as it were extended the chasm that separated the majority of Germans from their enemies. The enemy within was the counterpart of the enemy without. In other words the *Volksgemeinschaft* formed only one, albeit the essential, part of German war society; even though forced labourers, prisoners of war, and concentration-camp inmates were never part of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and—with few exceptions—could never have become so, they nonetheless have a place in any study of the German Reich in the Second World War.<sup>43</sup>

With war raised to the principle of the regime, and the community at arms to the proper form for society, the internal enemy could be stigmatized by claiming that it was harming this community at arms. Already during the First World War military psychiatrists had made the point that the war was turning the Darwinian principle of natural selection on its head, in that it was 'the physically and mentally inferior, those useless and harmful to society', who were being kept alive. In the National Socialists' war the social-Darwinian and military arguments were compounded into a lethal mixture, fortified still further by the Nazi ideology of physical and mental performance. Not least among the symbols of Germany's renewal and strength were the male body displayed, for example, in idealized form on public buildings—one has only to think of the sculptures by Arno Breker on Hitler's new Reich chancellery. Pseudo-scientific racism could here call on long-standing notions of beauty and ugliness. And the positive stereotype of masculinity was, paradoxically, reinforced by its opposite; by the countervailing image of men whose appearance conflicted with the ideal. In Jews (and blacks), it was believed, one found the misshapen bodies of the anti-types, the outward sign of their 'degeneration'—a concept (though not an ideology-linked one) from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

Jews embodied the foreign to a special degree. Since in the anti-Semitic, conventional view of the First World War they had been made responsible for

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness*. On individual groups see *Social Outsiders*.

<sup>43</sup> See the chapters by Karola Fings in the present volume, and pt. II of *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II. See also Kroener on 'Prisoners of War and Foreign Workers', in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 884–9, and on the employment of convicts and Jews also *ibid.*, v/II. 873–8.

<sup>44</sup> Mosse, *Image of Man*, 12–13, 177–8, and fig. on 179.

the defeat, their elimination in the Second had to seem only right and proper since this was, so it might seem, the only way to avoid a second defeat.<sup>45</sup> The racially and politically dictated divide within the nation did nothing to weaken the social cohesion of the war society (or, rather, the majority of it), especially since not a few profited from the deportation of the Jews. At first sight seemingly paradoxical, this prompts the question of whether the internal difference stabilized war society wherever possible rather than throwing it out of balance. Might not then the war inside Germany have been essential to the continuing war in the world beyond?<sup>46</sup>

## 2. PROPAGANDA AS A WEAPON

The propaganda slogans heard and seen daily suggested the ubiquity of the regime. Events and festivities through which the regime put itself on show combined military, folkloristic, and liturgical elements in a 'brown cult',<sup>47</sup> and helped endow the principle of rule by a leader with a sacred significance. Day-to-day existence, the reality of wartime life especially, was talked up and played down using aesthetic means that, though they also formed part of the political armoury elsewhere, were nowhere else used to the same extent for the purpose of demonstrating the regime's own innocuousness.<sup>48</sup> It was intended that anything negative should, through the meshing of politics and aesthetics,<sup>49</sup> pale into insignificance beside the radiance of the new, class-transcending *Volksgemeinschaft*. There were hardly any competing interpretations on offer. In contrast to what had been seen in the First World War, varying strategies for justifying the war—tailored to a given audience and that highlighted differing facets of the image of war inside society—were no longer possible. The Nazi regime's opinion-formers had 'blocked out' troublesome sources of differing views early on; in the Third Reich there was no place for any public divergence from the official line on the war.

One of the most important lessons from the defeat of 1918 (which was blamed not least on the success of enemy, and especially British, propaganda) was the conviction that propaganda-led information on and interpretation of how the war was going was an essential condition for the system's inner stability and military success in a total war. It was civilian society, not the military, that was the weakest link. That they simply could not afford a 'weak-kneed attitude' among the population was a fear expressed by Goebbels in March 1943.<sup>50</sup> It was not a question of 'mood' (*Stimmung*)—given the destruction and deaths in the bombing that idea seemed misplaced—so much as of 'attitude' (*Haltung*). The choice of words was meant to bring to mind the military virtue of steadfastness, something that proved itself only in times of crisis. It

<sup>45</sup> See Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 406.

<sup>46</sup> The question is rightly posed by Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 399.

<sup>47</sup> Gamm, *Der braune Kult*.

<sup>48</sup> Thamer, *Verführung und Gewalt*, 417–34.

<sup>49</sup> Reichel, *Der schöne Schein*.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted from *Wollt Ihr den totalen Krieg?* (1969), 450.

was this attitude that it was important to instil early and effectively. Thus in 1939 Reinhard Heydrich, head of the RSHA, urged special attention to be given to 'any attempt made in public—in bars, on public transport, and so on—to influence others in a way hostile to the people and the Reich'.<sup>51</sup>

The thinking and actions of those in charge of propaganda during the Second World War were moulded by the discussions on propaganda in the inter-war years.<sup>52</sup> Their spokesmen were as one in seeking not only to train the broad mass of the population in passive obedience through 'teaching them patriotic lessons' and providing information, but also actively to mobilize them for the war effort. A main influence on the design and organization of German propaganda in the Second World War was the link that parts of the population had made in the 1920s and 1930s between what was seen as the failure to conduct ideological warfare and the collapse of the home front. Enemy propaganda had, so this view went, led hostile elements within Germany to subversive acts that had ended up spreading to the troops as well (the navy in particular) before swinging back among the public and unleashing the November revolution.

Special weight was carried by the voice of Gen. Erich Ludendorff, who had been effectively in charge of the military during the final years of the war and had been the driving force behind mobilization. In his war memoirs, which appeared as early as 1919, and in his influential work *Der totale Krieg* (1935) Ludendorff placed the blame on the civilian agencies dealing with propaganda.<sup>53</sup> The memoirs of Maj. Walter Nicolai,<sup>54</sup> head of Dept. III of the army supreme command during the war, the work *Der Feldherr Psychologos* by the Reichswehr officer Kurt Hesse,<sup>55</sup> as well as the polemical work by Adolf Hitler, once head of propaganda for the NSDAP,<sup>56</sup> all left no doubt as to the enormous importance in a future total war of the state of mind of the people, of the 'soul of the people', and in their widely read works they all argued for an effective conduct of the war for minds.

Hitler, who from his own statements had concerned himself with the 'propaganda problem' since 1918 because activity on the German side had been 'modest, to say the least', outlined in 1925 his *völkisch* appreciation of wartime propaganda as a 'truly frightful[weapon]' in the struggle for the existence or non-existence of the German people, where 'all considerations

<sup>51</sup> Order from the head of the SD Reinhard Heydrich to heads of all security police (central) offices, on the principles of internal state security during the war, 3 Sept. 1939, in *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, ii. 268–9.

<sup>52</sup> See Deist, 'Die Reichswehr und der Krieg der Zukunft'; Verhey, 'Some Lessons of the War'. On mobilization through propaganda before 1939 see Wette in *Germany and the Second World War*, i.

<sup>54</sup> Nicolai, *Nachrichtendienst*.

<sup>55</sup> Hesse, *Der Feldherr Psychologos*. Shortly after the war began in 1939 Hesse was head of the army propaganda unit in the department of Wehrmacht propaganda, worked in the press and on radio, gave lectures, and wrote propaganda books. Following a conflict with Goebbels his office was suspended in 1941, and after the war he worked for two years with the US Army Historical Division.

<sup>56</sup> See on his activity as head of propaganda Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 527–43.

of humanitarianism or aesthetics crumble into nothingness', and to be always directed at the masses, one-sidedly subjective, limited to a handful of slogans, persistently applied, aimed at the feelings (because the majority of the people are 'feminine by nature and attitude'), 'popular', and 'at an intellectual level adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to'.<sup>57</sup>

The new Reich chancellor had in 1933 promised the Reichswehr to 'stiffen the will to fight, using all possible means',<sup>58</sup> thus creating the domestic-policy condition for waging a war as it had been constantly propagandized in the inter-war years. Conversely, the officer corps for its part boosted the vaunted unity between Party and Wehrmacht and idealized the *Volksgemeinschaft*, for it felt it could identify with Hitler's ends even if not with his means.<sup>59</sup> This time round, the mass of the population was to be motivated not through enforced militarization, but through ideologizing on a broad front. The lead was taken by a politician, and not as Ludendorff in his caesaristic model had proposed a military man. It was in vain that the war minister Werner von Blomberg had tried to persuade Hitler that Wehrmacht propaganda should be kept independent of the Reich ministry for propaganda and popular enlightenment (RMfVuP), which had been newly created in 1933.

In mid-1938 the OKW and the propaganda ministry came to an agreement on setting up propaganda units termed 'propaganda companies' (*Propagandakompanien*, PK) that would be controlled by the military but work to guidelines laid down by the Reich ministry. In time of war these would create and gather material at the front, which would then be processed by the ministry. In April 1939 the Wehrmacht propaganda department (WPr) was set up under Maj.-Gen. Hasso von Wedel,<sup>60</sup> and later raised to an office in its own right. While in formal terms the Wehrmacht's control was indeed independent of the propaganda minister, Goebbels exerted a growing influence over the content of the propaganda.<sup>61</sup> At the start of the war, the Wehrmacht propaganda department was running seven army and four Luftwaffe propaganda companies, as well as one navy company. Without any doubt, Wehrmacht propaganda developed during the war into a firmly established part of war propaganda. Even though conflicts between the OKW's department and the RMfVuP were not unknown, as a rule the two worked hand in hand right up to 1945.<sup>62</sup>

During the closing months of the war this cooperation took on new forms. Because members of the Wehrmacht still enjoyed a large degree of credibility, front-line soldiers in uniform were from October 1944 brought back to a number of major German cities to take part in 'word-of-mouth propaganda' campaigns. Wehrmacht propaganda officers worked together

<sup>57</sup> Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 161–9 (ch.6: War propaganda), quotes from 162–5

<sup>58</sup> See *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, i. 22.

<sup>59</sup> See Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, doc. 33–46, 165–82.

<sup>60</sup> See Wedel, *Die Propagandatruppen*.

<sup>61</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 104–10.

<sup>62</sup> See Uziel, 'Army, War, Society and Propaganda'.

with the ministry to boost the people's will to endure via positive-rumour campaigns, and to be able to report on the public mood.<sup>63</sup> It was quickly found that people were 'extremely receptive' to hearing the supposed views of front-line troops expressed, whether this was 'in cinema queues and department stores, on public transport, in restaurants and bars, in covered and outdoor markets', or, particularly, in the air-raid shelters. Probably no one realized that the soldiers were abusing their trust.<sup>64</sup>

How did ideology and propaganda go together? On the one hand the ideology of racial purity was not just a mixture of ideas serving the purposes of propaganda and designed to legitimize the actions of the regime and mobilize the population. On the other, it would be wrong to assume that the Nazi regime's propaganda accurately reflected its ideology. If the media had been a vehicle for the ideology, their main theme would have had to be anti-Semitism; yet before 1938 this played hardly any role in the media, and showed no great effect.<sup>65</sup> Nazi ideology was less for making use of in propaganda than for putting into practice.

The history of propaganda institutions and ideas is one thing, the effect it had on those it was aimed at is another. Propaganda was most successful where it could latch onto existing value judgements and reinforce them.<sup>66</sup> Where this was the case topics of conversation were supplied 'from above' that were picked up 'from below' and there taken further. In contrast to what had been done in the First World War, therefore, the regime was between 1939 and 1945 not content with influencing public opinion via propaganda and censorship. A finely woven web of snoops and informers—coupled with participant observation—was designed to keep track of and monitor attitudes in the army and civilian population. In the wartime Third Reich there developed an informal public opinion—written and spoken communication conducted at one remove from the official information provided by the line-toeing media. Guiding public opinion now went on in parallel with researching it. Thus, the '*Meldungen aus dem Reich*' supplied by the SS Sicherheitsdienst (SD) right up to the end of 1944 provided the Nazi leadership with a very reliable and up-to-date picture of how people were reacting to day-to-day events, and not least to how the war was going. In the final months of the war the mood in the population was then reported on by the Wehrmacht propaganda officers (WPrO).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See Bohse, *Inszenierte Kriegsbegeisterung*, 95; Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 424–46 ('Kraft durch Furcht'). On the oral propaganda campaign see *Das letzte halbe Jahr, Dokumente*, 55–125. In the immediate post-war period this link between the NSDAP and the Wehrmacht was denounced, and later kept quiet about; see Echternkamp, 'Wut auf die Wehrmacht?', 1062.

<sup>64</sup> This was the assessment by a lieutenant-colonel taking part in the 'Berlin special operation' on 18 Oct. 1944, quoted from *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, doc. 58, 127.

<sup>65</sup> See Kershaw, 'The Persecution of the Jews'.

<sup>66</sup> See the theoretical work by Bussemer, *Propaganda*, including on early propaganda research focused on the recipients.

<sup>67</sup> This instrument of the Nazi leadership's rule serves us today—a bitter irony of history—as a source for studying everyday life and what people were thinking, in *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945*; as a 'sequel', see *Das letzte halbe Jahr*.

National Socialist propaganda was far from taking the same form everywhere. Although 'fight on' propaganda is often seen as its essence, the war propaganda marks a third phase that followed a first one promoting the Party and stirring up political agitation, which had been directed against the Weimar 'system', and a second phase from 1933 to 1939 when after the seizure of power propaganda was aimed at integrating the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In war propaganda itself, in turn, a period of victory propaganda up to 1942 merged into a final phase of exhortations to carry on the fight. Besides the only partly escapist entertainment and the glorifying of the German 'defensive battles', there was anxiety propaganda that warned of the devastating consequences defeat would have for the Germans.

There was of course an ever widening gap between the official version of what was happening in the war and the picture the population saw through their everyday experience of it. The rhetoric of sacrifice from the moulders of opinion was confronted with the problem of existence for those affected—a discrepancy that was finally overcome by an agitation of terror. Propaganda was used less and less to persuade, and more and more to intimidate. With deterrent sentences handed down, and the concentration camp used as a threat, the regime was to be stabilized through fear. 'Kraft durch Furcht', strength through fear, was the motto for keep-on-fighting propaganda.

It was the effect of this that the Allies, who were analysing enemy morale so as to tailor their own propaganda to it, saw as a major reason for the Germans' unbroken will to fight. An expert opinion prepared for the British war cabinet at the turn of 1944/5 concluded that though very few Germans believed they could still win the war, most of them were at the same time continuing the fight for a variety of reasons. For one thing many hoped that prolonging the struggle would increase war-weariness all round and finally make a negotiated peace possible; and for another the Nazi leadership had, British observers were sure, managed to convince the soldiers as well as the population that their enemy was determined to destroy the German nation, so that fighting on was the only possibility left. "Victory or Siberia", they said, 'is a slogan of great power for a desperate people.' The Allies realized that Nazi propaganda made as much use of statements on the treatment of the Germans after a victory as they did of reports on the miserable living conditions in recently liberated countries like Poland or Greece, or on the situation after the unconditional surrender in Italy, Bulgaria, and Romania. The conclusion from this analysis of 'morale factors' was therefore that Nazi propaganda should be undermined and the German population told that 'unconditional surrender' was not a synonym for annihilation.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Plans to undermine German morale; War Cabinet, Report of the Committee on Methods of Breaking the German Will to Resist (12 Dec. 1944); Expertise Foreign Office: German Reactions to Defeat (2 Jan. 1945), 25–6, PRO, PREM 3 193/2. There see also the war cabinet report with a survey of current propaganda measures as an appendix (A: Main constant themes of political warfare against Germany, B: 'Black' propaganda in the battle for Germany), 30–5. SHAEF had earlier analysed fighting morale and proposed forming the committee. Eisenhower commented,



At this time Nazi war propaganda was barely satisfying the information needs of those concerned. Before the war propaganda had found it easier to tie in with the lives of those receiving it, for instance with the enthusiasm for technology and the carnival and annual fair culture; success came through aestheticizing and building up worlds of experience, and through the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft*. During the war, propaganda promised pleasures less frequently, and was more often calling for readiness to make sacrifices. Propaganda and the public no longer got on quite so well with each other.

The more the official agencies forfeited their credibility, the greater was the part played by informal communication, where rumour had an important function. Unlike in the years after 1914, this loss of trust was less abrupt. The more the way the course of the war was presented in the media differed from personal experience, and the more propaganda tied itself up in contradictions (why should a place already alleged to have been 'wiped out' need bombing again?), the more often did rumours abound about how the war was going. Since the system did not allow of a divergent opinion and the spreading of it, rumours not infrequently led to a denunciation. The prime place for swapping rumours was the public air-raid shelter or bunker; here people exchanged information on what they themselves had seen, what had been written to them in letters from the front, or what they knew from hearsay. They talked about death under the bombing, the number of dead, and how they had died. A rumour might well be bizarre and far-fetched, yet it was always closer to everyday experience than the Nazi propaganda. At least, most people were more inclined to put their trust in rumour. Because the media were broadcasting not information, but propaganda, they lost their purpose in the eyes of their readers and listeners. Informal communication, which at the beginning had been something that happened on the side, was now seen as a substitute system. The media were no longer able to control information among the population.<sup>69</sup> Most of all it was the paucity of official information about the bombing war that fed the demand for unofficial news. The home front became a rumour-mill. Time after time conversations were about what was actually happening at the front, about the use of 'new weapons',<sup>70</sup> and not least about Adolf Hitler himself.

'1. German morale on this front shows no sign of cracking at present. I am of the opinion that enemy's continued solid resistance is a main factor postponing final victory which, in present circumstances, can only be achieved by prolonged and bitter fighting. 2. Factors which are compelling the enemy to continue strong resistance appear to be: a) overall iron discipline of the Wehrmacht and stranglehold by the Nazi party. b) Successful Nazi propaganda which is convincing every German that unconditional surrender means the complete devastation of Germany and her elimination as a nation.' SHAEF Main, sgdt. Eisenhower, 20 Nov. 1944, to: AGWAR (R) UK Base, Proposals for breaking the German will to resist, PRO, FO 371/46791.

<sup>69</sup> The thesis put forward by Dröge, *Der zerredete Widerstand*, 35. See also Roland, 'Das Gerücht'.

<sup>70</sup> On the 'miracle weapons' see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 748–52.

## 3. HITLER'S CHARISMATIC RULE, AND THE FÜHRER MYTH

There have been long and heated debates about Hitler's role in the Nazi state. This stems not least from the question, central to the philosophy of history, of the extent to which individuals can steer the process of historical development, or whether their room for manoeuvre is not limited by structures. Can what happened between 1939 and 1945 be explained as the outcome of the Führer's will? Or was he himself subject to other forces whose dynamic at least part of the time carried him too along with it?<sup>71</sup> The conflict between intent and structure can be solved: Hitler's intentions clearly served primarily to create in German society an atmosphere that would allow the internal dynamic that his plans developed to become 'a self-fulfilling prophecy'.<sup>72</sup> The racial ideology that was served by propaganda and mobilization of the masses played a major role in the 'cumulative radicalization' of the regime.<sup>73</sup>

Where the far from uniform structure of the National Socialist state is concerned, there is argument as to whether this can be attributed to a deliberate control technique adopting the 'divide and rule' principle, or—and there is more in favour of this—has to be seen as the result of a charismatic style of leadership that, going beyond the bureaucratic rules of the modern state, relied on the citizens' loyalty to a particular person (their leader, the 'Führer'), and that was incompatible with there being institutional or legal constraints on Hitler's authority. Charismatic rule is a fragile social relationship;<sup>74</sup> for it to work, the charismatic leader's disciples must be ready to follow him in the certain belief that he has proven himself, and will carry on proving himself, in crisis situations. The decentralization of the apparatus of government did not lead to this being eroded, so long as the myth of the man with the charisma was not undermined by day-to-day events. Rather more, the dynamic of the polycracy worked in important areas of action to the advantage of the Führer; the genocide of the Jews remains the most striking example of this. The monarchy of the charismatic 'Führer' and the polycracy of the centres of power, far from being contradictory, were closely intermeshed.

<sup>71</sup> On this argument see the overview in Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* (1999), 69–92.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 91.

<sup>73</sup> Mommsen, 'Der Nationalsozialismus: Kumulative Radikalisierung'; see on this Kershaw, 'Cumulative Radicalisation'.

<sup>74</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1111–57, defines as 'charismatic', as opposed to 'traditional' and 'legal' (i.e. based on established laws), rule an extraordinary and transitory form of power that usually arises from exceptional situations and aims at dealing with particular crises. According to Weber 'charismatic authority' depends on the leader's heroic power or exemplary persona. It is not this itself, but those who endow him with the exemplary qualities and thus take him to possess supernatural or superhuman or at least specific powers or characteristics transcending the everyday, that give the charisma its effectiveness. Personal loyalty to such a leader is in the end founded in the individual's decision whether the 'proofs' of the leader's 'calling' are enough to lend him lasting charisma. Inexcusable failures thus undermine a charismatic rule. See the interpretations by Kershaw, *Hitler* 1889–1936, p. xiii, and Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iv. 603–23, 866–72.



Hitler's postponing of decisions, and more and more keeping aloof from the routine business of government during the war, was a characteristic of this charismatic leadership. This kept up among the population the mistaken belief that Hitler enjoyed an (in all senses of the word) supreme power of decision, and stood above all the party squabbles; in his relationship to society, to put it better, the basis of Hitler's rule lay in the image the *Volksgemeinschaft* had of its 'Führer'. The propaganda from Goebbels's ministry, and that from the Wehrmacht as well, played their part in drawing a glowing picture of the brilliant general, and of the Führer blessed by Providence. They presented the 'blitzkrieg' in Poland and the rapid victory in France as the result of his extraordinary gift for strategy. Hitler stood as the culmination of a long line of inheritance from Führer figures, which for instance in the book *Führertum* published by the OKW stretched through Ludendorff, Paul von Hindenburg, and Frederick the Great right back to Caesar and Hannibal. Hitler had, in Gen. Friedrich von Cochenhausen's opinion in 1940, 'through his victorious campaigns in Poland, Norway, and France joined the ranks of the greatest generals of all time'.<sup>75</sup> The man-in-the-street used the rather less respectful acronym 'Gröfaz' (Größter Feldherr aller Zeiten).

One would of course fall victim to the propaganda if one sought to make its effectiveness primarily responsible for this belief in the Führer. In fact, however, the foundations for the idolization of Hitler had already been laid in the years of peace. The beginnings of the Führer cult around Hitler lie in the Weimar period, in the early years of the Nazi movement when Hitler consolidated his position as leader of the Party. Deep-rooted notions of heroism and the Führer figure were part of the repertoire of national and *völkisch* thinking, and were solidly based in a political culture that already before the First World War stretched from the individual cult of Wilhelm II, through the nostalgic Bismarck cult, to the vision of a 'people's emperor' presented by Heinrich Claß, chairman of the Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*), in 1912. After 1918 the idea of heroic leadership, sometimes further exalted by a religious element, developed into an antithesis of the Weimar Republic. Instead of a democratic and even a monarchic relationship, the national right wing dreamed the pseudo-democratic dream of a relationship between the leader and his followers, in which the leader embodied the will of those who gave him their allegiance. The personality cult surrounding Hitler was under way even before the putsch; Goebbels had been assiduously promoting the Hitler myth since 1926. Yet it was not until 1930 to 1933, during the electoral battle for the Reich presidency, that the image of the national leader captured the imagination of a broad mass of voters, as may be seen especially clearly from the reaction to the murder of the leaders of the SA, ordered by Hitler in June 1934. The figure of Hitler, who after Hindenburg's death on 2 August 1934 had combined the office of Reich president with that of Reich

<sup>75</sup> *Führertum: 26 Lebensbilder*, p. viii.

chancellor, merged with how the public saw the NSDAP, and with it the local Party bosses. In the media—newspapers, radio, and cinema—there was blanket-coverage praise of Hitler as the ‘leader of the new Germany’, a view nourished by the certain belief that the Weimar system was at an end.

During the first years of the government propaganda boosted the portrait of Hitler as the sole public image of ‘the Führer’, and fostered a personality cult that let him appear the symbol of the unity of all Germans—the NSDAP’s ‘Heil Hitler!’ formula was more and more known as the ‘deutscher Gruß’, the German Greeting; a series of foreign policy successes during the 1930s then raised Hitler for a while to the peak of his popularity. The Hitler myth—an image, divorced from reality, of Hitler the hero—was not simply a product of propaganda; it reflected hopes that were already present in at least some sections of society. It was, for example, reported to the SPD-in-exile from the Rhineland that besides rumours of secret weapons ‘Hitler’s earlier foreign policy successes had also contributed to “the Führer’s miraculous powers” playing a great role among the people. Just one of these public-bar strategists is enough to send everyone there round the bend—everyone listens to the nonsense, but no one dares express doubts for fear of being denounced.’<sup>76</sup> What is clear is that the large measure of approval of the Nazi regime could not have happened without the popularity of its leader.

Though the euphoria generated by occasional staged events did not last long, many Germans still enjoyed the vague certainty that with Hitler the national interest was in safe hands. He was seen not as a dictator, but as someone carrying out the will of the people—and, in the pseudo-religious rhetoric, of ‘Providence’. Hitler’s gain in popularity might well be at the expense of the local Party functionaries, yet he was welcomed as the guarantor of morality, something that in the eyes of the population the Party bosses were lacking.<sup>77</sup> For most Germans Hitler was far removed from their grey, everyday world, and (his) charismatic leadership depended, at base, on its out-of-the-ordinary character.

Hitler’s charisma developed, after 1939, in the climate of tense interplay between the public’s fear of war, enthusiasm for war, and weariness with war. So what effect did the war have on Hitler’s image and the power it exercised? Part of the unspoken consensus in the Hitler myth was that the Führer was restoring the nation’s honour and greatness, though without this placing too great a burden of sacrifice on the Germans. The euphoria over the national successes of the 1930s and the relief that they had been gained by peaceful means were two sides of the same coin. Propaganda had consequently for years been presenting Hitler as a bringer of peace. The ‘fear of war’ mentioned in the reports of the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei*

<sup>76</sup> *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade)*, 4 (1937), 9.

<sup>77</sup> The discrepancy that existed between the Hitler image and the picture of the ‘little Hitler’, and its function for the myth is stressed by Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 83–104, 160–4. See on the other hand the picture given by the Party activist Reibel, ‘Das Fundament der Diktatur’, 88–9.

*Deutschland*, SPD or 'Sopade')<sup>78</sup> and the SD at the time of the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the Anschluß with Austria, and finally the Sudetenland crisis of 1938, set a clear limit to enthusiasm for him.

The start of the war made a marked inroad into the development of the Hitler myth.<sup>79</sup> But when war finally came people followed their Führer, and there were no protests. Anti-war sentiment anyway had no place in public discussion, and anyone against the war was berated as a defeatist. Opposition was tantamount to treason. Most Germans were quite sure that Hitler would soon end the war that had been forced on them, since in the end what mattered to him was ensuring peace. This was the message given by innumerable speeches on the radio, and this was what one could read in Brockhaus (the standard German encyclopedia).<sup>80</sup> The rapid victories for which Hitler was enthusiastically fêted in the weekly magazines were, at first, wholly compatible with this way of seeing things. The way the war was going banished the scepticism of the first few months. With 'the ranks tight closed' (in the words of the Horst Wessel marching song), the war instead of lessening the *Volkgemeinschaft's* loyalty to Hitler deepened it further. The quick military results achieved in the west heightened the already virulent pattern of thought in which the military man and leadership melded into one. On the one hand Hitler embodied the simple soldier on the front line, while on the other he was also seen as a military genius. Hitler as commander-in-chief: this component of Hitler's image was first delineated in public when, in April 1939, he reviewed the military parade in Berlin for his 50th birthday, and the propaganda acclaimed him not only as a statesman but also as a future general. The formula cropped up in many of the speeches made by commanders on the bigger Wehrmacht bases to mark the Führer's birthday.<sup>81</sup>

For Germans the peak of enthusiasm in the Second World War at once brought to mind the nadir of the First. It was reached when German troops marched into Paris, and on 22 June 1940 the French acknowledged defeat in a symbolic act in the forest of Compiègne, at the same spot where in November 1918 the head of the German civilian armistice commission, Matthias Erzberger, had accepted the terms of the armistice. A victorious peace now seemed within Germany's grasp, without the homeland having been affected. Hitler and his Wehrmacht being able to force Britain too to capitulate seemed only a matter of time. Most people could hardly wait for the invasion of the hated island across the Channel to begin. But when the invasion failed to take place, a quick peace settlement became unlikely, and a second winter of war was just round the corner, the short-lived high spirits of summer 1940 ebbed away.

<sup>78</sup> *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade)*, 4 (1937), 9.

<sup>79</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 151; on the decline of the Hitler myth during the war, 149–225.

<sup>80</sup> 'The battle for the freedom of Greater Germany [became] at the same time a battle for the future of Europe . . . In Germany was now being defended a Europe of internal order, of independence, and of national justice . . . and thus a Europe at peace': article on Adolf Hitler in *Taschen-Brockhaus zum Zeitgeschehen*, 2nd enl. edn (Leipzig, 1942), 174.

<sup>81</sup> See the documentation by Kopp, 'Wehrmacht feiert', 485–6 and docs. 8, 14, 21, 27.

Basic trust in Hitler however continued despite the growing everyday problems and repeated plunges in public mood, right up to the eve of the attack on the Soviet Union, though faith in the Party faded. A look back over the amazing successes at home and abroad, plus the prospects for an early victorious peace, buoyed up respect for Hitler during the first phase of the war. One general summed up how most Germans saw his genius as follows: 'The means and methods of leadership can be set out and explained, but not what makes the genius of [Hitler's] leadership: the clear and timely grasping of what is important, a lightning-fast drawing of conclusions that often do not follow the strict rules of logic but transcend them, and not least a bold and responsible taking of a risk of untold difficulty. All of this the Führer has often enough shown, and shows anew again and again.'<sup>82</sup> Someone speaking like this was revealing his readiness to cave in to the irrationality of his supreme commander.

Charisma assumes success. As the series of victories came to an end and living conditions in Germany worsened, Hitler's image lost more and more of its power until finally, at the last moment, it largely fell apart. When in autumn 1941, after an initially trouble-free advance, the Wehrmacht ground to a halt at the doors of Moscow, and in mid-December Germany declared war on the USA, a peace settlement receded into the far distance. The public's having been given the premature impression that the crushing of Bolshevism was at hand paved the way for disappointment. When then shortly before Christmas a call was made to collect winter clothing for the troops, for the providing of which clearly no preparations had been made, morale sank for a while to a low ebb. When the first big air raids were made on German cities in 1942 those living in Germany itself also began to feel the force of the war. At the same time, realization of the criminal nature of the regime began to grow. For a long time rumours had been growing of the murder of the mentally handicapped in their own country, and soldiers on leave brought back stories of the barbaric way war was being waged on the eastern front. Finally, too, it was no longer possible to ignore the brutal repressive measures being taken at home. It was at this time that a 'silent majority' began to form that looked more and more critically on the Nazi regime and blamed it for the miseries of war.

Nonetheless the Hitler myth lost its effectiveness only slowly. There were a number of reasons for this: for one thing, the 'Führer' had become too much a projection of the national utopia, stretching back to the imperialism of the nineteenth century and now the only thing that could make up for what people were suffering. Hitler was excused responsibility for unwelcome incidents with the assumption that in particular cases he was unaware of what was going on—'if the Führer knew . . .'. For another, propaganda had managed to shift the onus for the way the war was going; it was not Hitler's fault, but that of the Jews and Bolsheviks. Responsibility for Germany's fate lay with Churchill and Roosevelt. The American president and 'the people behind him' were from

<sup>82</sup> Friedrich von Cochenhausen, afterword in *Führertum: 26 Lebensbilder*, 414.

now on those mainly to blame for the war; propaganda raged at 'cultureless' Americanism, but needed at the same time to try to tone down the 'lessons of 1917', the memory of the decisive contribution that had been made to that war by the United States.<sup>83</sup> On top of that, the Germans had been looking for a *victorious* peace, something that in the eyes of most people Hitler seemed, at least up to early 1942, to guarantee. Fear of a further defeat, which the Nazi propaganda was stirring up, formed a negative basis for faith in Hitler. Finally, hundreds of thousands owed their rise in life to National Socialism, and it was not until 1942 onwards that the war turned into a disaster for the bulk of the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile the SD was increasingly often reporting war-weariness—even before the catastrophe of Stalingrad. Already in September 1941 the journalist Paulheinz Wantzen in Münster, summing up what those in Westphalia knew of the mood among the troops, wrote: 'They'd gladly have a go at England, but Russia was one big load of crap.'<sup>85</sup> Hitler had in the meantime retreated to his headquarters in the east, and let himself be seen and heard in public less and less often. Increasingly, the Führer seemed to be a commander-in-chief rather than a man of the people.

When the defeat at Stalingrad at the end of January 1943 gave the lie to earlier press reports that had been telling of the certainty of victory, and the media were suddenly acclaiming the heroic sacrifices of the Sixth Army (the capitulation by Gen. Friedrich Paulus with 90,000 men was hushed up to make this possible), the bad news found the population quite unprepared. Rumours of the surrender soon began to circulate, and struck a further blow at the credibility of the Wehrmacht bulletins. From this viewpoint, Stalingrad was not just a military, but also a psychological turning point in the war. For the first time, Hitler himself was held responsible for a failure.<sup>86</sup> Among the public the number of those who longed for peace, who criticized Hitler's war policy, and reproached him for being unable to bring the war to an end, grew apace. Opposition in the form of 'latrine rumour' and flyposting campaigns like those of the 'White Rose' gained fresh fuel, while propaganda continued to evoke, in contrast to 1918, the image of a *Volksgemeinschaft* in which the front and the homeland, the Germans and their Führer, were keeping together as one. In reality, the unity stemmed less and less from enthusiasm for Hitler or National Socialism than from hatred of the enemy and fear of defeat, plus a certain amount of nationalism. The Führer myth still held its power most widely among Party activists and the troops at the front—almost to the end of the war. Yet that too was part of an awareness gained during the First World War: how traumatic it could be, at one's lowest point in a 'total war', to lose belief in those at the top to know what they were doing—so that even if only for this reason it was better to carry on than to suffer the trauma again.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich*, 323–69.

<sup>85</sup> Wantzen, *Das Leben im Krieg* (5 Sept. 1941).

<sup>87</sup> See Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 408.

<sup>84</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 171–3.

<sup>86</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 190–1.

Conversely it can be taken as certain that Hitler's image would have gained fresh lustre if the war had gone the right way. This is shown by the euphoria that flickered up just before and after the Allied landing in Normandy on 6 June 1944, and the hope that burgeoned for a brief while with the long-heralded use of the V-weapons. 'Once the Führer lets his new weapons say their piece,' one NCO wrote home in September 1944, 'then final victory will come as well.'<sup>88</sup> How little the potential of the Hitler myth was spent can be seen from popular reaction to the assassination attempt on 20 July 1944: fury among the soldiers and their families at the murder attempt, relief that it had failed, and anger at the treacherous 'officers' clique'. 'These traitorous swine are all guilty,' wrote for instance Hanni F. from Fraustadt in Lower Silesia to her husband at the front. 'These scoundrels should have had something far worse than hanging done to them.'<sup>89</sup> That had of course not much to do with a fresh enthusiasm for the war, but much more with the acceptance that Hitler was the one who could end the war successfully. Cpl. R., who in September 1944 was hoping for victory, was not an isolated case: 'Yet everything is not yet lost, for we still have a Führer. And he will lead us. We want to have hope in our Führer, right now that's the best thing we can do.'<sup>90</sup> Had Stauffenberg's attempt succeeded, it might counterfactually yet again be argued, there would certainly have been a successful new version of the 'stab in the back' legend.<sup>91</sup>

This shows the effect of self-mobilization, and the minor part that resistance played. Having looked at the ideology of integration of the militarized *Volksge-meinschaft*, at the interplay between population and regime in propaganda and in building up Hitler's charismatic rule, we should therefore now look at the extent of the control exerted over and by society.

#### 4. SOCIAL CONTROL, SELF-POLICING, AND RESISTANCE

While in the First World War the ensuring of internal order came under the regime of the military commander, to whom civil executive power had been transferred after war was declared, Blomberg had early on relinquished this regulatory task to the Prussian interior minister Hermann Göring and his auxiliary police recruited from the ranks of the SA. Where maintaining public security and boosting through propaganda the readiness to fight and make sacrifices were concerned, the military had, in contrast to 1914–18, withdrawn from organizing the home front—a loss of function that continued throughout the war.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Report by field post office VIII at AOK 6 for September 1944, app., 15, Uffz. Alfred L., 11 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/49, 5.

<sup>89</sup> Hanni F., 25 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/49, 15.

<sup>90</sup> O.Gefr. R., 16 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/49, 10.

<sup>91</sup> On the history of the genesis and effect of the 'stab in the back' theme, see Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden*.

<sup>92</sup> See Deist, 'Das Militär an der Heimatfront', 386–7.



In wartime society from 1939 to 1945 policing was in the hands of Dept. IV of the RSHA, the secret police (Gestapo), which is surrounded to the present day by a nimbus that derives from Nazi propaganda. The Gestapo is seen as the quintessence of the National Socialist organs of repression, and in hardly any other field did people feel so tempted in 1945 to, as one might say, put its members in a different class from the rest of society. As the history of policing informed by the approaches of social and cultural history has portrayed it, the ramifications of social control however argue against this long-nurtured understanding of how matters stood.<sup>93</sup> How, then, did social control operate during the war? How important was the Gestapo?

The members of the political police had, in the Communists, a common domestic enemy from quite early on. During the early years of the Third Reich, until the regime was firmly consolidated inside Germany in 1936/7, they were able to get used to making everyday use of violence.<sup>94</sup> The Gestapo's relationship with possible rivals such as the military's foreign counter-intelligence office (the Abwehr) and the SS Sicherheitsdienst (SD) was clarified; the SD from then on concerned itself mainly with opinion research and foreign intelligence. The Gestapo's new area of operation was now defined in terms of preventive security and 'völkisch policing'. On the eve of the war the Gestapo was given a new, totalitarian nature that went well beyond the repressive use of terror in a dictatorship. The new, racist image of the enemy was projected on a far wider range of persons, and in place of the state the new point of reference for policing operations was 'the German *Volk*'. As part of this the police themselves could say who was to be seen as an 'enemy of the *Volk*'. Werner Best, who at this time was reorganizing the RSHA, saw in the police the 'newly created instrument of *völkisch* self-protection of the German people'. In this it was the counterpart of the Wehrmacht as the 'instrument of external national self-protection'.<sup>95</sup> Between 1939 and 1945 the focus of police activity shifted. In the first half of the war particularly the Gestapo's main work was in racially motivated general prevention. Towards the end, the political function came to the fore, as terror was used more and more frequently against the German population and against alleged resistance by foreign forced labourers, in order to prolong the rule of the Nazi regime.

An offender no longer had to have committed a demonstrable offence, but was defined by the regime as an enemy without any kind of offence as the cause. In the security policing area, too, the *potential* offender was the construct of 'the Other', from whom a danger to racially and ideologically pure society appeared

<sup>93</sup> The Gestapo did not become the subject of historical research until some fifty years after the end of the war. See Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*; *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität*; Wysocki, *Die Geheime Staatspolizei im Land Braunschweig*; Johnson, *The Nazi Terror*; and in *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg* see the literature on local and regional studies, social history, and biographical works.

<sup>94</sup> On what follows see the comprehensive résumé of research by Mallmann and Paul, *Die Gestapo*. On the role of the Gestapo in pre-1939 Germany, *ibid.*, ch. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Best as quoted from Mallmann and Paul, 'Die Gestapo', 605; on Best see Herbert, *Best*.

to emanate. In the National Socialist social programme, therefore, it was less a matter of the enemy than of the *image* of the enemy. Given this elastic concept, the Gestapo's area of responsibility widened. As a result of this radicalization of police action, which now needed hardly any basis in law, more and more groups came under suspicion. This matched the picture that the *Volksgenossen* (racial comrades) had of the Gestapo; it was also however behind the suspicion felt by, for instance, Social Democrats in the Ruhr that the Gestapo was 'itself spreading rumours of all kinds, as a deterrent'.<sup>96</sup> The Nazi press nurtured the image of an all-pervasive, all-knowing, and all-powerful police apparatus—a myth that was fostered further by rumour and by the reports in the exile German-language press, and that served to raise the effect the Gestapo had above what was actually experienced.<sup>97</sup>

In a process of self-radicalization, the RSHA's Dept. IV (the Gestapo) set about putting Nazi ideology into effect—following bureaucratic principles, clad in the mantle of due conformity with the law, and with far-reaching authority to impose ad hoc measures. This saw a paradoxical development: because the scope and geographical bounds of its jurisdiction were drawn increasingly wider while at the same time staffing and organizational resources remained limited, Dept. IV from 1943 on lost more and more of its power. As a great many of its officials were employed in the annexed and occupied territories, the surveillance coverage in the wartime years was roughly on a par with that in 1936/7, when on average just *one* Gestapo agent had to keep watch on the inhabitants of a small town. In August 1941, the nominal staff numbered 7,677, against a population of 70.2 million (within the 1937 borders).<sup>98</sup> There can be no question of there having been blanket surveillance—but there was the *impression* of it, which was no less effective.

The shortfall was to be offset by an internal shift to more extreme methods, which once the war began no longer had anything to hold it in check. 'Keener interrogations', deportations, 'special treatment', and mass murder (which with the 'weeding out' of Soviet prisoners of war went on even within the Reich itself) were the outcome of this widening—in legal, organizational, and geographical scope, and in the methods used—of power. The Gestapo had in the *Arbeitserziehungslager* (AEL, Educational Labour Camps) a procedure all their own. This type of camp, coming under the concentration-camp system, helped to lend terror an everyday presence in the war society. Within the Reich there were 400 prisons in which around 10 per cent of workers, primarily foreign conscripts and forced labourers from Poland and the Soviet Union, served time. The AELs were the Gestapo's 'private concentration camps', prisons with appalling working and living conditions for people who were often, for political and economic reasons, sent there on no specific grounds.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade)*, 7 (1940), 94.

<sup>97</sup> See also Mallmann and Paul, 'Allwissend'.

<sup>98</sup> Figures from Mallmann and Paul, 'Die Gestapo', 622.

<sup>99</sup> On what follows see Tech, *Arbeitserziehungslager*; Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo'.



The purpose of the time spent in an AEL was not to 'educate', but to instil absolute obedience and to deter through fear of a further incarceration. On the pretext that they had broken their contract of employment, the prisoners were imprisoned and treated in a way that was also common practice in a concentration camp. The terrible food, the medical conditions, the mistreatment and murder of Jews and prisoners of war—none of this was concealed from the German population. Industry, local authorities, and the military all had an interest in the setting up of AELs, for these served them as a means of disciplining and controlling the German and foreign workers, especially as (unlike those in a concentration camp) those affected returned to their workplace after a while. For the most part men were involved; among women, the foreigners were given a harder time than the German female workforce.

The building up of an unreal backdrop of menace, and the brutalizing experience of wielding power in the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Government-General and the annexed part of western Poland, fed the violence.<sup>100</sup> With what have been called the 'crimes of the closing phase of the war', practices that had become commonplace in eastern Europe rebounded on the Germans themselves. To change the Gestapo into a 'radicalized executive of the ideology' it had clearly been enough to have the top posts in the central institutions in Berlin and at regional level filled appropriately, with no need to make comprehensive changes in personnel. The staffing needed for persecution and terror was rooted in the Weimar Republic's civil-service law and, in part, in personnel drawn from among the middle-class intellectuals.<sup>101</sup> After war started, there were among the 31,374 officials (as at 1 January 1944) a large number of conscripts on standby service, including women and foreigners. An *esprit de corps* developed, especially during the war, through the increased threat from without, through the long-trumpeted danger of Bolshevism, and finally towards the end of the war through fear of the enemies' vengeance. The way in which bureaucratic procedures distributed the work among many lessened—if not totally removed—a personal sense of responsibility.

The ratio of watchers to the watched makes it fairly clear that the Gestapo on its own could not carry out a comprehensive surveillance of wartime society. On the one hand other institutions of the state cooperated with it—the uniformed and criminal police, the SD, the Labour Front (DAF), the NSDAP, and the authorities at local level, as well as the Wehrmacht with the OKW's foreign/counter-intelligence branch and the secret field police. The circle of institutions helping the Gestapo however needs to be drawn wider still: the railways, the post office, the tax authorities, the local registrars, health, and employment offices, and industrial firms (one need only think of the Abwehr's factory representatives) all provided a wide range of services without which the terror and and persecution would not have been possible.

<sup>100</sup> On the persecution of the Jews see Johnson, *The Nazi Terror*.

<sup>101</sup> Mallmann and Paul, 'Die Gestapo', 616–17.

On the other hand private complicity constantly made up for the lack of police resources. Reports from agents who enjoyed the trust of the circles they were set to infiltrate, together with individual denunciations—again, encouraged from above—resulted in a social ‘self-policing’ that provided a wide base for the machinery for ruling war society.<sup>102</sup> The regime, if it wanted to achieve its political, racial, and military goals, was dependent on the cooperation of the population in wartime as well. The Nazis profited from the readiness of individuals to point their other ‘national comrades’ out to the Gestapo and by doing so put supposed opponents of the regime in danger of their life. That denunciation—which was far from being a specifically ‘women’s’ offence—came about not necessarily from political motives but could also be used to deal with conflicts at work, or with neighbours, or in the family, was quite a different matter. During the bombing raids, for instance, the demands of the regime offered the Germans a possibility for getting rid of evacuees who had been compulsorily billeted on them.<sup>103</sup> It cannot be concluded, from the fact that the Gestapo was not a massive organization, that it was of minor importance for the population. For the way they behaved it was, as will be evident for what follows, their idea of how dangerous the Gestapo was that counted, not the relatively small number of personnel it actually had. The picture of a surveillance state does this interactive dimension of the terror as little justice as talk of the ‘Nazi crimes of violence’.

Recalcitrant youngsters attracted special attention from the regime. As the youth of 1918/19 had, through their ideological susceptibility, proved to be a weak point in society, pressure on them to conform grew during the war.<sup>104</sup> The experience of juvenile crime during the First World War encouraged the inclination to take preventive measures to nip it in the bud. The changes in lifestyle that the war had brought about, and the vast increase in the pressure to conform it had generated, led to ‘juvenile crime’ and ‘juvenile depravity’ becoming a central domestic policy problem.<sup>105</sup> To keep the crime statistics low the number of sanctions rose, which had the opposite effect. This cycle of war and criminalization led in turn to a burgeoning of the organizations involved and the rank growth of related legislation, in particular a new juvenile criminal law in the autumn of 1943.

No consensus can arise without there being dissent, and consent has resistance as its counterpart. And just like active or passive support for the regime, opposition to it is a complex phenomenon that is far from being reducible to a few simple blacks and whites. In 1943 Hitler told the Reich- and Gauleiters: ‘even when opposition in society is not dangerous to us, it can still cause us all kinds of trouble. It grouses and grumbles . . . and it robs us of an enormous

<sup>102</sup> See Gellately, ‘Die Gestapo und die deutsche Gesellschaft’.

<sup>103</sup> See Dördelmann, *Die Macht der Worte*; id., ‘Aus einer gewissen Empörung hierüber’; Schubert, *Judasfrauen*; Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation*.

<sup>104</sup> On the role of the Hitler Youth see Armin Nolzen in Part I of the present volume.

<sup>105</sup> Kebbelies, *Außer Kontrolle*, 265; see also Jureit, *Erziehen*.

amount of our fighting energy.' He looked enviously at Stalin, who had rid himself of this problem early on. It was easier for him, he said, because Stalin had, through education and repression, 'organized his people to be as one'.<sup>106</sup> The main thing to bear in mind, therefore, is that the total claim to power and the picture of a total exercise of power, as the propaganda of the 'Führer state' painted it, do not reflect the reality of the structure of rule in the Third Reich. Studies of what went on in the regions, for example of local administration, and biographical works on various Gauleiters reveal the coexistence of public administration and Party bureaucracy side by side within the Nazi regime's power structure.<sup>107</sup> The particularism that sprang from local special interests and striving for regional identity faced the Führer state's requirement of centralization, in a state of tension that became evident in many political fields.

German resistance (*Widerstand*) was long seen as being 'a resistance without the people behind it'. Taking a broader view of what resistance meant, the illegal, political opposition was seen to be accompanied by everyday, even if more limited ways of resisting. The term 'resisting' (*Resistenz*)<sup>108</sup> focuses attention on nonconformist behaviour, on the practice of resistance, and underlines the fact that there were certainly limits to how far National Socialism permeated society. Criticism from the pulpit, being friendly with Jews, staying away from Nazi-organized events, or not giving the 'Heil Hitler' greeting: this kind of behaviour did nothing to hinder the conduct of the war nor the policy of annihilation, but it did set certain bounds to the totality of these within Germany and formed points of friction between the regime and the population.<sup>109</sup> In the Party organ *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten*, for example, the fact that some people in Herford were quite openly greeting each other simply with 'g'morning' was seen and condemned as a symbolic act of egoistic refusal of loyalty. 'Anyone who pointedly fails to give the German salute is quite certainly also capable of malicious gossip, of sabotage, and of conspiring with foreigners. In the NSDAP and in public service there really is no place for people like this. Honourable *Volksgenossen* will need to keep a close watch on them, and impose on them the quarantine of general national contempt.'<sup>110</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Hitler to the Reich- and Gauleiters on the war situation and war aims, 8 May 1943, quoted from *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, ii, 154.

<sup>107</sup> See, with further literature references, the report on research by Schneider, 'Nationalsozialismus und Region'.

<sup>108</sup> Broszat, 'Resistenz und Widerstand'. For an overview see Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* (1999), 183–217.

<sup>109</sup> One need only see *Contending with Hitler*.

<sup>110</sup> *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* (WNN) of 28 Apr. 1944. The commentator made a link between this behaviour and the course of the war. 'Just "hello" is used in greeting today by that fraternity of opportunists and jugglers of principles who in former days of peace used to salute others with "Heil Hitler!";' he fulminated. 'Now, when for many National Socialism is no longer synonymous with taking, but only with giving, when the war with its tough effects on our lives and how we live is demanding deeds instead of lip-service, these contemptible lowlifes are doing a quick about-turn, and think they have to distance themselves from the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* fighting the war.' This, the WNN warned, would need to be remembered for 'the

Yet it is a big step from a symbolic act to real conspiracy. A broadly framed concept of resistance therefore runs the risk of misrepresenting the balance between dissent and consensus, in which when it came down to it faith in the Führer clearly predominated right up to the closing months of the war. It was not mere nonconformity, but only openly declared political opposition and an active attempt to unseat the dictator, that could really put the regime in jeopardy.

After 1939 the strength to bring Hitler down could come only from the ranks of the administrative elite.<sup>111</sup> Apart from the SS, only the Wehrmacht had access to the instruments of power realistically needed for a coup. And apart from the Christian churches, which as institutions offered no basic resistance, there was nowhere except the armed forces where opposition on a massive scale could have been organized. The only thing with any chance of bringing the regime down was resistance from within its own ranks.<sup>112</sup>

The influence that the start of the war and the way it developed had on the decision on outright resistance underlines the nature of the process. The support for the regime by a large majority, unwavering during the first war years, did not just offset an opposition that led to resistance—it was also a brake on the readiness of individuals to resist. Why should anyone risk his life for a putsch when the result of a successful attempt would be to be looked on as a traitor by most of society? So long as the conspirators could not hope for broad support, the decision was put off further and further. Even in 1944 there was scepticism whether, after Hitler's death, the revolution from the top would be vindicated by a revolution from below. Yet the plotters of 20 July 1944 lacked not just active support from the masses, but also passive backing—because of a regime wielding terror that spread fear through the apparent all-pervasiveness of its agents, and prevented the dissatisfaction of individuals from coalescing into collective protest.

This affected even the troops themselves. Although in the final weeks of the war desertion did take on massive proportions, deserters were still a small minority. Unlike in 1918, their defection did not lead to collective protest: there was no strike by the military, no mutinies, no surrendering without a fight by entire units. In the Second World War revolt by soldiers was nearly always an individual matter. All the more surprising are the accounts of the 'objectors', who while physically present in a theatre of war in an 'onlooker role' at the same time experienced it and reflected on it from an intellectual distance. Thirty-two-year-old Cpl. Erich Kuby, for instance, threatened in

day when peace comes'; anyone who refused to stand up and be counted by saluting the Führer was showing that he was ready to side with the enemy. Printing a reader's letter, the *WNN* added that choosing to take leave of others not with the Hitler salute but with 'tschüss' ('so long'), with which young women in particular were aping the French 'Adieu', was 'far from showing a determined German attitude of mind', and 'should be put an end to once and for all' (*WNN*, 6 May 1944).

<sup>111</sup> On the attitude of the elites, see *Die deutschen Eliten*.

<sup>112</sup> See the chapters by Winfried Heinemann in the present volume.

September 1942 on the eastern front with being sent to a punishment battalion, commented harshly on the fact that millions of soldiers were exposed to the 'natural danger' of war, but not to the 'special conflict' with the regime. They dodged this by 'behaving rationally when in an irrational situation . . . their common sense in the detail is insanity in the whole, their brave soldierly conduct is criminal complicity. They are not victims of a leadership, but members of a gang; and it does not cease to be a gang just because it includes 99 per cent of the people.'<sup>113</sup>

If the bomb that exploded in Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg in July 1944 had killed the dictator, how would people have reacted? Though there was a great longing for peace, the majority were still loyal to the regime *ex negativo*; through the war itself, through the lack of any alternative to the unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies at the Casablanca conference in 1943, and through fear of a victorious Soviet Union.<sup>114</sup> Probably an end to Hitler's power would have divided opinion in German war society. If the plotters had been able to end the war on terms that seemed favourable to the Germans, they would no doubt have enjoyed support. But given the Allies' war aims and their attitude to the German resistance such a scenario was highly improbable. It was far more likely that Stauffenberg's circle would be seen by many as traitors who had sapped the Reich's ability to fight at a crucial moment—a variant of the 'stab in the back' legend that was indeed still being nurtured after the war ended. Right up to 1945 opinion in many sections of the war society left the resistance bereft of a broad base; a fact that can only enhance the moral worth of everyone who took part in resistance.

Yet two things have to be kept in mind that stand in the way of an unqualified embracing of the insurgents from the group around the events of 20 July: their political views and the role they played in the National Socialist system. It was not the ideas of liberal democracy that were to imbue West Germany's constitution after 1945 that determined the view of society held by this resistance by the elite, nor the way they planned to organize it<sup>115</sup> (though that is what people were asked to believe well into the 1960s<sup>116</sup>). Those leading the national-conservative resistance were looking back rather to the days before 1933. They (with the exception of the Kreisau circle) saw in National Socialism the unhappy high point of populism, so for them ideas of oligarchy, authority, and corporatism played a central role. Democracy based on political parties and on rule by parliament—those basic values of the Weimar Republic—had

<sup>113</sup> Kuby, *Mein Krieg*, 282. Kuby's document was commented on approvingly by Böll, under the much-quoted title 'Ein Nestbeschmutzer von Rang' [A Nest-Fouler of Quality] in the *Süddeutschen Zeitung* (6/7 Dec. 1975) repr. in Böll, *Essayistische Schriften*, iii. 287–91. With regard to the statements after the war, Böll praised Kuby's refreshing 'cynicism'. He had 'put himself in front of a court martial presided over by Dr Hans Filbinger. One would have been justified in being nervous about the verdict', *ibid.* 290–1.

<sup>114</sup> See Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* (1999), 214.

<sup>115</sup> See, on the rich literature on this topic, Heinemann, 'Arbeit am Mythos'; Heinemann and Krüger-Charlé, 'Der 20. Juli 1944'.

<sup>116</sup> See Steinbach, 'Widerstand im Dritten Reich'.

no place. That Germany must, even after Hitler, remain a dominant power in Europe, with borders extending into eastern Europe, was at the outset unquestioned; not until 1942/3 did it become clear to those supporting resistance that Germany's future role in Europe would end up a smaller one.

The generation-determined character of the leadership elite, seen in collective biographical studies, makes it reasonable to suspect that among the men of the military resistance too one would find anti-Semitism and nationalism.<sup>117</sup> Among the officers of Army Group Centre—there at least—there were many who knew of the extermination of the Jews on the eastern front and in the rear areas. The younger of them especially had after 1939 started by approving and supporting the Nazi regime. There were of course exceptions: they included Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hans von Dohnanyi, Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, and Helmuth James Graf von Moltke. But had those who headed the later military opposition themselves ordered the murder of Jews? Or did knowledge of the policy of annihilation strengthen them in their resolve to resist? On this point opinions differ.<sup>118</sup>

What part did coming from the nobility play? On the one hand what Alf Lüdtke calls the 'sense of self' (*Eigen-Sinn*) of the nobleman was at the root of the resistance by a known minority of nobles like Ulrich von Hassell, Helmuth James Graf von Moltke, Adam von Trott zu Stolz, Henning von Tresckow, and Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg. From this fact the nobility in the Federal Republic for a long time drew its self-image and identity. On the other hand the fact that remnants of the noble life found sanctuary in the totalitarian state acted as a stabilizing factor for the National Socialist regime. For a largely impoverished and socially destabilized minor nobility, which since 1918 had had to do without an emperor, a 'Führer' was just what was needed. National Socialism's anti-bourgeois ethos suited a minor nobility that was trying to bridge the discrepancy between material indigence and an inbred claim to leadership through a specifically blue-blooded value system in which character, hardness, and attitude ruled instead of the middle-class guiding values of education and wealth. The relationship with National Socialism remained a contradictory one nonetheless. This applied not least to the military aristocracy; a great many generals who came from the nobility saw Hitler the politician as a parvenu, whose boorish manners they found as repulsive as his unconcealed brutality. Conversely, Hitler the 'revolutionary' despised these aristocrats for their reactionary cast of mind.<sup>119</sup> Despite the closeness, then,

<sup>117</sup> See Dipper, 'Der deutsche Widerstand und die Juden'.

<sup>118</sup> See Ueberschär, 'Der militärische Widerstand'; Gerlach, 'Männer des 20. Juli'; contrary views by Arnold, 'Verbrecher', and Heinemann, 'Der Widerstand gegen das NS-Regime und der Krieg an der Ostfront'; see neutrally Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler'.

<sup>119</sup> This was true most of all for Field Marshal von Manstein, who had once been a page at the Kaiser's court. Immediately after successful operations, on 30 March 1944, Manstein and Kleist were given their marching orders; their successors were two generals with a middle-class background, Walter Model and Ferdinand Schörner. Rommel, too, was sponsored by Hitler as a middle-class counter to the military aristocracy (I am grateful to Karl-Heinz Frieser for this insight).

the distance between the nobility and the total state remained, as when the 'Heil Hitler!' was omitted, the toast to the Kaiser was proposed, or the wrong flag was flown over the country residence. This persistent relic of noble manners and behaviour in many social and cultural contexts must not, of course, be confused with a predisposition to resistance on the part of the nobility.<sup>120</sup>

Resistance from *women* in the wartime Third Reich remained the exception. Whereas from 1916 to 1918 there had been social protest everywhere—women workers demonstrated, housewives ignored the rationing regulations, young women rioted—there was, given the comparatively stable supply situation in the private sphere, no trigger point to set it off. During the Second World War demonstrations by women were a rarity, and as a rule unsuccessful. No doubt because it was the only big protest campaign by women that had an effect, women's resistance is linked with the name of the Rosenstraße in Berlin. There, in the spring of 1943, non-Jewish women took a public stand against their Jewish husbands being deported.<sup>121</sup> This event leads us on to another aspect, that of the role of women and men in the war, and the outbreak of widespread violence.

<sup>120</sup> See the study, rich in references, by Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*.

<sup>121</sup> Gruner, 'Die Fabrik-Aktion'; contra see Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*.



### III. Violence Given Free Rein

THE unparalleled removal of limits on the use of force, the extension of the theatre of war to internal society, the war of annihilation in the east, and the mass murder of Europe's Jews that was closely linked with the war are all features of the Second World War that also had far-reaching importance for the degree of socialization inside Germany. The broadening of warfare affected people's experience in a variety of ways. Furthermore an examination of how the violence was experienced goes beyond the shrinking of moral boundaries to look at the question of guilt, which often suggests distinct categories of perpetrator and victim and takes no account of the shades of grey that actually existed. The terms 'perpetrator' and 'victim', which are in any case more normative than analytical, are better seen as the two extremes of a wide spectrum. Conversely, what happened should not be lost to sight within a relativizing concept of force—even though the whole of the 'short' twentieth century (that is to say the years from 1914 to 1989–91) does when one looks back at it appear to have been an 'age of violence'.<sup>1</sup> The following pages will therefore look at forms of active and passive experience of violence: first at the role played by women and men during the war, then at the waging of genocidal war, and finally at the passive experience of violence under the bombing from the air.

#### I. WOMEN ON THE 'HOME FRONT' AND IN MILITARY SERVICE

A fundamental feature of war and the military was (and is) the parts played by the sexes. So German society too, both civilian and military, had a dimension of femininity and masculinity that was specific to the war. This involves not merely the male- or female-connoted images of war, but also the question of whether and to what extent women had access to the resources of the military, and the extent to which this had an influence on subjective and collective identity.<sup>2</sup> Continuity and change in the relationship of the sexes are undoubtedly a yardstick for the totalness of the war, the central feature of which is the disappearance of the boundaries between military and civilian. It is however also true—and this must be stressed again—that unlike that in 1914–18 the domestic theatre of war was defined less on a gender-specific basis in that the most important dividing lines running through it were not those between men and women. Basically, it is sensible to look at the history of women in the war not in isolation, but rather as part of the cross-section of the social, economic,

<sup>1</sup> Hans Maier, foreword in *Wege in die Gewalt*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> On this see Seifert, 'Identität', and for a general view Bock, 'Geschichte, Frauengeschichte, Geschlechtergeschichte'.



cultural, and military histories of a war society.<sup>3</sup> This will be done in the various sections of Volume IX, wherever appropriate. The first subject of study here is the National Socialist picture of women during the course of the war; that of the image of maleness follows later.

The starting point will continue to be the traditional middle-class template of a natural, biological division into two sexes that has long been seen as the outcome of social and cultural moulding processes in a given historical context. On the one hand this bipolar ordering of the sexes in wartime society was at the start bolstered by the fact that the image of man as aggressive warrior and of the peace-loving woman needing protection was borne out by the experience of war—at least as the propaganda presented it. Göring, in his address to women workers at the Rheinmetall-Borsig works at the beginning of the war mentioned earlier, said: ‘When there is a war, the heaviest burden of it falls on the women. They are the *patient sufferers in silence*.’<sup>4</sup> Those who like the actress Ida Wüst paid tribute in the ‘front literature’ (books written for the troops) to women’s calm resolve in wartime daily life underlined the ‘*unspectacular heroism of the German woman*’.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand the events in the war broke down the dividing walls between the sexes. When men were called up for military service and had to be far away from home, there was only a limited extent to which they could still act as the family’s provider and protector. At the same time, as the war became tougher, manpower resources (not only in Germany) were more stretched, so that women took on tasks that until then had been the preserve of men—in both the civilian and military spheres.

National Socialism, it is true, showed itself capable of merging the partly contradictory images of women that had been created until then. In books, films, and the press the picture of the racially pure housewife with several children and no make-up coexisted with the contrasting one of the worldly wise vamp, the fashionable good-time girl, and the woman shopper. In some areas the racial split in society shifted the earlier ranking of the sexes. The ‘Aryan’ woman ranked higher than any Jewish, or Polish, or Russian man. Men belonging to the persecuted minority suddenly counted for less than most German women, who were part of the majority. This unaccustomed experience came first of all to women who went to work in the occupied territories. When one female army clerk auxiliary entered a woman colleague’s room and discovered a man—a Jew and former schoolteacher—standing at an ironing-board surrounded by underclothes and bras and doing the other auxiliary’s ironing, she closed the door ‘in embarrassment’.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Daniel, ‘Zweierlei Heimatfronten’, 391; from the war economy angle see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 769–74, v/II. 835–6.

<sup>4</sup> Hermann Göring, address at the Rheinmetall-Borsig-Werken Berlin, 9 Sept. 1939, in. *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, ii. 271 (author’s emphasis).

<sup>5</sup> *Wir sind bei euch*, 6. In 1941 Wüst was in the film *Hauptsache glücklich* (author’s emphasis).

<sup>6</sup> Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 73; see Harvey, *Women*.

The war offered young women especially (provided they were not part of the persecuted minority) a great many opportunities for their lives not to take the traditional path. In contrast to the conservative image of woman cultivated by Hitler and his propaganda minister, women could now take up a career that would otherwise have been closed to them—as a salaried worker in industry or in a civilian (or military) office, or as a leader in the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM) or *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD). The opening up of opportunities outside the traditional boundaries of gender may have been one reason why, in spite of the worsening living conditions during the second half of the war, the great majority of women remained loyal to the regime.<sup>7</sup>

Wherever women were obliged to take the place of conscripted men in the workforce, in trade or agriculture, or they were offered attractive jobs in industry and administration, they mobilized themselves—as they had in the First World War. Nevertheless it did not prove possible to raise the level of women working in war industry, because for women who had to look after dependants taking on a job in war production was not a practical possibility, and was also not financially worthwhile. Only seldom were there chances of longer-term employment or qualifications, since when it came down to it they were acting as stopgaps for male workers who were temporarily absent. Moreover, the firms preferred to make use of foreign civilian workers and prisoners of war.<sup>8</sup>

The increasing level of war service by women made the total character of the war especially clear to those living at the time. The presence of German women behind the lines and at the front must have put a question mark behind the allotted roles of the sexes.<sup>9</sup> It was, as a brief glance at the past shows, nothing new—women had already served in the Prussian army. Marie Elisabeth Lüders, a leading personality in the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF: an umbrella organization of German women's organizations), had from 1916 as head of the war office's central bureau for women's labour made sure that women workers were available on a volunteer basis for the armaments industry. The 'National Committee for Women's War Work', a union of thirty-seven organizations, provided support. To free men for front-line service, women could from 1917 also be employed directly in the ranks as 'base-area auxiliaries'. Women had thus been active not only, as memory will have it, as nurses, but also and even more as helpers behind the lines. In the 1920s women were employed in the women's signals corps

<sup>7</sup> Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 400; see 'Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat'.

<sup>8</sup> See the résumé of research in Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 393. On female employment in the Second World War see Winkler, *Frauenarbeit*; Hachtmann, 'Industriearbeiterinnen'; Hancock, 'Employment in Wartime'.

<sup>9</sup> See Hagemann, 'Militär, Gewalt und Geschlechterordnung'. See further the older documentation by Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, and the monograph by Seidler, *Frauen*, on the Third Reich: 35–202; Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*; summary by Hagemann, 'Jede Kraft wird gebraucht'. For more recent studies: *Zur Problematik von Soldatinnen*; Campbell, 'Women in Combat'; Zipfel, 'Wie führten Frauen Krieg?'

that had been set up in July 1918; they worked as telephone, telegraph, and radio operators, mostly in the occupied Baltic area. A positive memory of this 'unknown army' was nurtured in the 1930s in publications by people like Lüders herself.<sup>10</sup>

The National Socialists created, with the Defence Act of 21 May 1935, the legal framework for imposing on both men and women the duty, going beyond compulsory military service, of 'service to the fatherland'.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the Reich Labour Service Act of 29 June 1935 young men underwent medical examination and conscription for the RAD. For girls and young women, on the other hand, serving in the RAD remained until 1939 a 'privilege' for volunteers; only those going on to higher education were obliged to give six months' service to the RAD before continuing their studies. When the war started women between 17 and 25 had to serve in the RAD if they were not under training or having to help their family farming the land. Though the RAD's women and girls were initially employed in caring for the sick and elderly, looking after children, or as household helps, the 'decree on further war work by the Reichsarbeitsdienst for young women' of 29 June 1941 set the course—because of the rising demand for personnel in the Wehrmacht—for a compulsory one-year service as a 'wartime female auxiliary'. From then on women also worked in the Wehrmacht, mainly in the clerical and signals branches.

The start of the war saw a widening of women's activities. In the first phase they followed the victorious Wehrmacht to the conquered territories, to Poland in the autumn of 1939 and then, between the spring and summer of 1940, to Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and finally France. Yet up to 1941 the number of women conscripted remained limited. For one thing mobilization was based on the assumption that the war would not last long, and because of the changeover from a peacetime to a war economy there was in any case a male workforce available.<sup>12</sup> And for another the idea of women working on war service did not match the conventional image of women that Nazi propaganda had fostered during the 1930s. True, single women could go into gainful employment, but for married women the regime had planned a place firmly within the home. From the ideological, population-oriented viewpoint a woman's main duty was to make the fatherland—indeed, the Führer—the 'gift' of as many children as possible, and to bring them up in the spirit of National Socialism. Personal doubts about having a child in the middle of a war did not count against the responsibility for producing further generations—quite the opposite. Men, too, were reminded of their duty, as may be seen from an article in the Seventh Army's news-sheet for the troops. The information that between 1915 and 1925 half a million fewer

<sup>10</sup> Lüders, *Das unbekannte Heer*. Lüders's aim was 'to fill out the male image of battle with the experience and work of the indispensable woman comrade' (p. viii).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 49.

<sup>12</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II (chapters by Kroener).

children had been born each year than before the Great War was followed by the statement that 'that would today have meant having around five million more soldiers and armaments workers. With that, this war would have been won long ago.'<sup>13</sup> The cult of the 'German mother' stood in the way of the full-scale employment of German girls and women—at any rate at first.<sup>14</sup>

Another reason for not exploiting the possibilities of labour conscription was that further discontent on the home front, and a second 'stab in the back' for which after 1918 the women had been given a fair share of the blame, had to be avoided at all costs. The 'war wives' enjoyed far more support from the state than had been the case in the Kaiser's Reich, though they and their families got this more effective support at the expense of the occupied countries. Even without their husbands, most married women were able to bring their family through the war years. For those who did go out to work, their family allowance was reduced by the amount they earned. This gave the regime an important tool for keeping the society of the Third Reich in balance.<sup>15</sup> The social imbalance in the way conscription applied, with increasingly more working-class women than those higher placed being directed into war work, caused resentment among both civilians and soldiers.

The number of women on war work was not at first intended to be limited to those conscripted for it. Girls and women were, instead, encouraged through the press to volunteer wherever health and family circumstances allowed. From the summer of 1941, when after the attack on the Soviet Union the demand for labour increased, active efforts to recruit young and older women for war work began. However, the more men were wounded or killed in action, and the more men were called up and those who had at first been in reserved occupations fell prey to the 'combing-out' campaigns,<sup>16</sup> the greater the need became to call on women as a replacement workforce. Against this in the early 1940s there was, of course, still the officially fostered view of the role of the sexes and the concern about generating unrest in Germany (and also at the front); in the end, thanks to the forces' postal service, the troops soon became aware of the sour mood at home.

In January 1943 the crunch point was reached. The massive casualties in Russia brought about a change in the policy on women as well; in a Führer decree Hitler called, in a second phase of military service for women, for the 'comprehensive employment of men and women in tasks for the defence of the Reich'.<sup>17</sup> Every woman between the ages of 17 and 45—and from the end of July 1944, 17 and 50—had to register for work in the war industry (as did

<sup>13</sup> Article 'Kinder im Kriege?' in *Armee-Nachrichtenblatt* of 24 Nov. 1944, Seventh Army, BA-MA MSg 2/2697, 49. That this view was not shared at the front can be seen from a handwritten question in the margin: 'So why didn't we win the 1914/18 war?'

<sup>14</sup> See Weyrather, *Muttertag*; Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*; Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*.

<sup>15</sup> Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, 322–51; ead., 'Loyal'.

<sup>16</sup> On the reserved-occupation procedure see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 869–73.

<sup>17</sup> Decree of 13 Jan. 1943: comprehensive employment of men and women on tasks for the defence of the Reich, repr. in Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 375–7.

all men between 17 and 65). In the second half of the war there were not only more women working on the home front, but—as there had been by the end of the First World War—also more and more young and older women working with the Wehrmacht behind the lines. As ‘Wehrmacht auxiliaries’ they were now playing a greater role; ultimately, following the second ‘total war service’ decree on November 1943, there were around 450,000 women in uniform. The ratio between the rear-area female auxiliaries and the troops is estimated at 1:20, not including Red Cross nurses numbering about 15,000 at the start of the war. Some 300,000 men were ‘freed up’ by women taking over their duties.<sup>18</sup>

From the beginning of 1943, after the defeat at Stalingrad in February, women took on fresh military tasks that had up to then been done by soldiers. In this third phase they worked particularly in searchlight batteries, and later also on anti-aircraft radar sets and in army and Luftwaffe headquarters units. By the end of the war the number of ‘female Luftwaffe auxiliaries’, recruited from the ranks of the Reich labour service for young women (*Reicharbeitsdienst für weiblicher Jugend, RADwJ*), reached 25,000. In the fourth phase, in the second half of the final year of the war when all soldiers capable of bearing arms were to be thrown into the front line under a vast replacement recruiting programme, a great many women were employed especially in air defence. Aside from girls conscripted for war service, they were not infrequently volunteers. The fact that in the end a significant part of the Reich’s air defence was women’s work is in stark contrast with the usual notion of a gender-specific allocation of roles in wartime. The picture of the man protecting ‘the women at home’ is a long way off reality.

Even in the closing months of the war publicity (handled by the NSDAP) was urging women to volunteer for ‘defence work’. Jutta Rüdiger, Reich ministerial adviser for the League of German Girls (*Bünd Deutscher Mädel, BDM*), and the Reich women’s leader, Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, made a call for ‘Volunteers—come forward!’. Because, they said, ‘the enemy in their hatred seek to wipe out our German nation . . . women and children have been driven from their homes, many of them have suffered the unspeakable . . . Today, when every German man able to carry a gun is serving his fatherland, we women and girls want to do our utmost to make it possible for every soldier in our homeland to fight at the front.’ It ended with a religious exhortation designed to lend final resolve and take away the fear of death: ‘Our motto is: God helps those who help themselves!’<sup>19</sup> In an appeal to ‘German women and girls’ in the Sudetenland, women doing war service was presented as ‘a national law of total war’ that would allow women to play a part in the ‘final victory’ which alone could ‘heal the wounds of this war’. Serving in the Wehrmacht women auxiliaries corps would, it was said, win for women the gratitude of future generations.<sup>20</sup> Quite a different note is sounded in a diary entry by the

<sup>18</sup> See Seidler, *Frauen*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted from *ibid.* 70.

<sup>20</sup> Slogans of the Wehrmacht women auxiliaries corps, see *ibid.* 71.

writer Annemarie von Puttkammer; she noted that the latest appeal to women to join the Wehrmacht was 'in fact universally disapproved of'. She clearly did not believe in the voluntary nature of this measure, but assumed that businesses were being 'systematically combed out for it'.<sup>21</sup>

Should the Wehrmacht women auxiliaries, despite their readiness to serve voluntarily, ever offend against military regulations, they were liable to the sanctions of the military penal code and the Wehrmacht's disciplinary procedures; at the same time, as civilian employees, they enjoyed no military status. Should women employed in occupied territory be taken prisoner, they were under the Hague and Geneva conventions 'non-combatants' with the right to be treated like prisoners of war. Grouped in the women auxiliaries corps, these women wore uniform but were billeted outside the barracks. The *NS-Frauenschaft* (Nazi Women's Organization), in charge of women's organizational and ideological training, had with backing from the Party asserted its authority over the women's branch of the RAD.<sup>22</sup> Their activities were as a rule confined to the lower-rank tasks, and very few women indeed were able to make a name for themselves in the military. That the pre-war woman sport aviatrix Melitta Gräfin von Stauffenberg, like Hanna Reitsch and Beate Uhse, became a Luftwaffe pilot is untypical.<sup>23</sup> The more women found themselves in uniform, the more the political and military leadership found themselves having to confront the contradiction between the ideal of their image of womanhood and the reality of woman's new role; it was a contradiction that could not escape the public, especially when the Wehrmacht auxiliaries wrote home about their circumstances. The inconsistency needed to be refuted by presenting the image of the special 'woman soldier'. Though the woman was indeed far away from her family, in a man's world with its ethos of comradeship, the natural order between the sexes must not be jeopardized. Even in military surroundings the male soldier was the woman's protector, and she had a right to special care. As the 'OKW guidelines on the employment of women in areas outside the Reich borders' put it in June 1942, 'The measures necessary for providing welfare must however take account of the woman's nature, and must on no account result in a militarization of women, something that is particularly liable to occur in the Wehrmacht environment.'<sup>24</sup> And in late 1944, when the Wehrmacht women auxiliaries corps was set up, the OKH too emphasized this principle in the employment of women, which must continue to apply 'in particular also when working together', that 'the "female soldier" is inconsistent with our National Socialist view of womanhood'. For these women the use of weapons, the mark of the man as a soldier, continued to be strictly prohibited—even when in danger of being taken

<sup>21</sup> Puttkammer, *Die verführten Herzen*, 330.

<sup>22</sup> See Seidler, *Frauen*, 69–72; on organization, training, and employment see 77–152.

<sup>23</sup> See Bracke, *Melitta Gräfin von Stauffenberg*. I am grateful to Winfried Heinemann for this reference.

<sup>24</sup> 'Richtlinien des OKW zum Fraueneinsatz in den Gebieten außerhalb der Reichsgrenze' of 22 June 1942, quoted from Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 361–2.



prisoner. Their superiors were reminded of their duty of 'guarding the health of German girls and women, and thus of the future mothers of our nation'.<sup>25</sup> The women's good name also needed to be protected, as denigrating terms like 'officers' mattress', 'force's floozy', and 'station bicycle' were frequently bandied around. Propaganda tried on the one hand to present calumnies like these as a deliberate campaign by the enemy and the Jews, while on the other stepping up social control.

There were, of course, hostile images of women. Already in the years between the wars the *Freikorps* soldiers had during the civil war battles drawn a clear line between 'soldiers in skirts' and 'nice' women with, among the latter, the nurses in particular occupying men's minds.<sup>26</sup> Against this, women fighters—the Russian women's battalions in 1917, for example—had reinforced the relationship between the sexes through the negative example of an irritation that was contrary to nature. Like the 'soldiers in skirts' before them, the women partisans in the Second World War carried the stigma of the female Jew and Communist, and by doing so strengthened the feeling that the war was being fought to get rid of a hateful and repellent enemy.<sup>27</sup>

Amid all the tensions between propaganda, the traditional roles of the sexes, the struggle against the enemy within, and the war economy's need to make full use of human resources, women's experience of the war between 1939 and 1945 varied widely.<sup>28</sup> The spectrum runs from the privileged mother through the persecuted Jewess and humiliated 'asocial' to the girl conscripted for labour service and the Wehrmacht auxiliary.<sup>29</sup> Women supported the fighting troops in many different ways—which after 1945, just as after 1918, hardly anyone wanted to remember.<sup>30</sup>

That even a striking breach of the traditional order of things such as the use of German women pilots clearly caused no public offence—or at least less so than had the appearance of tram conductresses after 1914—shows how flexibly the relationship between the sexes could be managed under the conditions of total war.<sup>31</sup> The politicization of private life in the name of the *Volksgemeinschaft* helped remove the traditional divide between the two. Women were far from being only mothers and wives. They were involved in the 'safeguarding of the racial inheritance', joined anti-Semitic women's organizations, worked as secretaries on compiling lists of confiscated Jewish property, or helped supervise concentration camps. The bellicose rhetoric of many women recorded in things like their diaries was a match for any hate-speech from men.<sup>32</sup> Under National Socialism the 35 million German women (1939 figure) became perpetrators,

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Seidler, *Frauen*, 127.

<sup>26</sup> See Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*.

<sup>27</sup> See Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 398.

<sup>28</sup> See Bajohr, 'Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst'; Higonnet and Higonnet, 'The Double Helix'; for an overview Frevert, *Mann und Weib*; on women's everyday experience Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*; ead., 'Loyal'; see also *Zwischen den Fronten*.

<sup>29</sup> See Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 399.

<sup>30</sup> For a summary see Hagemann, 'Jede Kraft wird gebraucht'.

<sup>31</sup> See Daniel, 'Zweierlei Heimatfronten', 398.

<sup>32</sup> Nieden, *Alltag*, 116; see Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite*; Harvey, *Women*.

hangers-on, spectators, and victims.<sup>33</sup> Military service for women made it possible for a matching number of men to be sent to the front. The mobilization of the latter is examined in the pages that follow.

## 2. THE MORALE OF THE TROOPS

From the very beginning the military elite had seen the opportunity that Nazi rule offered them, since the National Socialists, for all their diplomatic diversionary manoeuvring, made no secret of their aim of restructuring the whole of society for war and thereby bursting the 'shackles of Versailles'. The military elite had however not only repeatedly to fear for its importance as 'the nation's only bearer of arms', when first the SA and then the SS put this monopoly in doubt; they were also given less and less of a share in the political and strategic decision-making. Hitler had, to be sure, initially courted the Wehrmacht as the 'second pillar' of the state alongside the NSDAP, but he then went on to destroy the traditional structures to his own advantage by no longer giving the chiefs of the general staff any say. In 1938 he had downgraded the army to being a tool in his hands. The Wehrmacht's fighting strength became less the result of 'overall' planning than a matter of tactical and operational management on the battlefield.

Among the special features of the German military leadership is moreover the great extent to which it was permeated by ideology. Not only political but also military thinking was dominated by National Socialist norms. The fact that criticism, by counting as defeatism, was taboo prevented any controversial challenging of the way the war was going, and corrupted the leadership. The cult of soldierly virtues stood in the way of a realistic planning of human and material resources, since the appeal to the supposed characteristics of the German soldier—bravery, strength of will, strong nerves, a steady faith—seemed enough to guarantee victory. The longer the war lasted, the more this bordered on auto-suggestion, with the fatal outcome that the number of German casualties rocketed; two-thirds of all German soldiers who died in the war were killed in 1944 and 1945.

When one reads German soldiers' letters home and looks at the photographs they sent to their relatives or brought back when on leave, it becomes clear that for many of them the war was, especially at the beginning, a 'trip abroad' and an 'adventure'.<sup>34</sup> And indeed the campaigns did give many men (and a few women) the opportunity for the first time in their lives to escape from the narrow confines of their own surroundings. This is also evident from talking to ex-members of the Wehrmacht about their lives, and it is illustrated by books about the war written when it was over.<sup>35</sup> Understandable as this observation has been, there is another aspect that needs to be explained.

<sup>33</sup> See, with individual examples, Bock, 'Ganz normale Frauen'.

<sup>34</sup> On soldiers' letters see Latzel, 'Vom Kriegserlebnis zur Kriegserfahrung'.

<sup>35</sup> Schröder, 'Die Vergegenwärtigung des Zweiten Weltkrieges'.



The bigger question that has long been waiting for an answer is why the German army carried on fighting right up to a moment that is all too often described with the hackneyed, and inadequate, expression 'the bitter end'. An answer to the reason for the unflagging morale of the troops is all the more needed because already really by the winter of 1941/2, and at the latest a full year before the actual end of the war, there could be no doubt that defeat was inevitable; Allied planners were estimating that the army's inner resolve would crumble by 1944. Since 1945 a number of differing explanations have been offered that are not mutually exclusive. They take the basic view that there are various ways of making a civilian into an obedient soldier, willing and able to kill. The measures needed for this moulding of behaviour include (and had done since before the twentieth century)<sup>36</sup> political indoctrination, repression through the threat of punishment, a rigid training through drill, and motivation of the soldiers as belonging to a community at war whether this was to have its roots in comradeship or in some differently based conviction that what they were doing made sense. Only at first sight can this be seen as a purely military phenomenon belonging in a sphere of its own. In fact it quickly becomes apparent that it makes more sense to talk about aspects of a single society at war.

*In the first place*, emphasis has to be laid on ideological indoctrination as a motivating factor. The Wehrmacht having sworn loyalty to National Socialism led, it is said, to the continuing of the struggle and the brutalizing of the war on the eastern front. The soldier's ideological commitment to his nation was to ensure unconditional readiness to sacrifice his life. For the front-line soldier, seeing the fight through the filter of Nazi propaganda, his possible death seemed to have purpose through being for the greater good of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>37</sup> Against this it was argued that through their closeness to Nazism the army divisions studied have distorted the overall picture, and that the lectures they were given in political thought meant little to the troops in general. Undoubtedly ideological education and nationalist propaganda was suitable for mobilizing men (and women) to serve, to attract volunteers, and to commit them to a higher cause; but where fighting at the front itself is concerned this sense of duty is surely not sufficient explanation on its own.

The idea of ideological warfare was not new. Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already arranged for countless education officers at the front and at home to give the 'schooling in patriotism' that, going beyond party-political differences, would provide an ideological buttress to national steadfastness, confidence in victory, and readiness for sacrifice: they did so in vain.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See Bröckling, *Disziplin*.

<sup>37</sup> Bartov, *Hitler's Army*. The role of ideological conviction has also been stressed by Förster, 'Motivation', and Schulte, 'The German Soldier', and also early on by Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*. See also the chapters by Jürgen Förster in the present volume.

<sup>38</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, 104, later wrote, when calling for 'national education', that he could only wonder 'when he thought of the inefficient means by which the attempt was made to give patriotic instruction during the World War'.

With the help of the Reichswehr, which because of this had already in the middle of the 1920s been calling for the early mental rearmament of Germany, Hitler put the ideas from 1917 into effect. As early as February 1933 he assured the military elite that in future every German would, as a result of National Socialist education, be ready to go to war for his people. In place of patriotic education the Reich defence minister Werner von Blomberg, in May 1934, set the 'idea of the community of blood and fate shared by all Germans' as the measure to be instilled in the minds of the soldiers.<sup>39</sup> A key role in the picture of history that went with this was played by the myth of the front-line warrior of 1914–18. The German soldier of the First World War was idealized as having paved the way for the National Socialist *Volkgemeinschaft*; the erst-while corporal Adolf Hitler embodied this teleological view of things, where interpretation of the past merged with goals for the future in the Third Reich to form the ideological amalgam of 'the people' and 'the people's army'. The military purpose was twofold: to increase the Wehrmacht's striking force, and to give it the necessary backing.

The most lasting motivation came at first from its own successes. Nothing did more to bolster fighting morale and a sense of superiority than the rapid succession of victories, in particular the triumph over the supposedly 'traditional enemy' France, of which propaganda too took the fullest advantage. Against this, it must be remembered that a limit to the total war of 1939–45 can be clearly seen not least in the shortcomings in the way the war was fought: right up to the end, there was no overall strategic concept. However impressive the outcome of the blitzkrieg may have been, there was no strategic thinking behind it.<sup>40</sup> A blitzkrieg strategy was first developed for the attack on the Soviet Union, but this had certainly already fallen apart by the winter of 1941/2, making further strategic planning impossible. There was in any case no single, central military authority that could have worked out and coordinated an overall strategy—a fact that offers an especially striking contrast to the western Allies. Conversely Hitler was, for the time being, quite certain of his military's will to win, even when, half a year on, it became clear that there was going to be no blitzkrieg victory in the east. In June and July 1942, on the eve of the second summer offensive, two decrees signed by Field-Marshal Keitel ruled that '*wehrgeistige Führung*' (ideological education and support to fighting morale) was to replace the earlier expression '*weltanschauliche Erziehung und geistige Betreuung*' (ideological education and spiritual care). This was mostly a change of form, not of content; there were no special 'education officers', and the troops' military superiors were in charge, not the Party.<sup>41</sup>

After the defeat at Stalingrad, the growing scepticism towards the regime prompted the political leadership to step up the effort in the field of ideological

<sup>39</sup> See Förster, 'Weltanschauung als Waffe', 293, with the quotation (decree by Reich defence minister Von Blomberg of 24 May 1934).

<sup>40</sup> See Frieser, 'Blitzkrieg-Legende'.

<sup>41</sup> See Förster, 'Weltanschauung als Waffe', 294–5.

warfare as well—an indication of the weaknesses in the system of which they were themselves aware; it was a growing scepticism that even propaganda's skilful reinterpretation of the disaster was unable to prevent. Can there be a clearer admission by the political and military powers—that-be that the morale of a war society falls short of the expectations than the wish to manipulate them? It is no coincidence that as in 1916/17 the decision was closely linked to the course the war was taking; what Verdun and the Somme were in the First World War, Stalingrad and Kursk were in the Second. The Party and the Wehrmacht now worked hand in hand. Some 300 speakers and political leaders from the NSDAP were to go on a training course at Sonthofen (one of the four 'Ordensburg' residential academies for the Nazi elite) to prepare them to talk to the troops at the front, and at home to preach the gospel of determination to hold out and a spirit of readiness to make sacrifices. In mid-October 1943, when the situation had got still worse, Hitler told the commanders of the three armed forces inside Germany that the German officer must act as his own political commissar and lead the men under his command as fanatical bearers of the National Socialist ideology.<sup>42</sup> On 22 December 1943 and 8 January 1944 followed the Führer decrees on the introduction of the *Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier*, or NSFO (National Socialist leadership officer, a German version of the political commissar).<sup>43</sup> As in 1917/18, the principle of obedience to orders was no longer enough for the military leadership; the soldier's will to fight must stem rather from his understanding of the aims, from his inner conviction, indeed from his 'belief' in the National Socialist cause, and in victory. One soldier raised in a Protestant vicarage and fighting in southern Italy in April 1944 noted how this belief shaped the way the war was experienced by the young in particular. Belief in final victory, he wrote, 'for many really had become a faith in the narrow sense of the word', one to which no need for objective proof applied. 'Recently a sensible-thinking man—and what's more, one who has studied history—said to me "I am quite certain we shall win this war. It's just that at this moment we don't know how". This remark could indeed sum up the faith of many Germans who have been educated in National Socialist thinking.' Under the effect of earlier successes and the propaganda message, there was everywhere 'an even hazier feeling' that 'there must be a favourable outcome, because anything else is simply not possible'. Evident in this is, among the younger troops at least, the lasting effect of their ideological upbringing which made them fight on to the end—in 'a mindless certainty that was impervious to all insight, and with their eyes blindfolded'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See Förster, 'Weltanschauung als Waffe', 295–6.

<sup>43</sup> See repr. in Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialistischen Führungsoffiziers', doc. 5, 94 (22 Dec. 1943); *Wofür kämpfen wir?* See also Weinberg, 'Adolf Hitler und der NS-Führungsoffizier'.

<sup>44</sup> 'Journal politique', BA-MA MSg 1/2684. Forty years later a soldier who had fought at the front, reading through his diary entries and letters home, made the following comment on the recurrent talk of 'unshakeable faith': 'Did we really believe in it? Today, we feel that it was often

The NSFO was to take care of the uniformity of this ideologizing of the military. Hitler himself repeatedly called directly on the military elite to stiffen the resolve of the people and the people's army in the fight against Bolshevism. The formal independence of the various armed forces where providing *wehrgeistige Führung* was concerned was at an end. In 1917, the *furor teutonicus* had ensured continuing resolve; in 1944/5 the soldier was to hold his ground to the very end of the war of ideologies as a steadfast fighter for the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*. 'By the blazing flame we vow', went the words spoken at the Midsummer's Eve ceremonies in 1944, 'in the Asiatic war to overcome our simple good nature, to draw from the destroying fire the strength to burn with merciless hatred against our enemy. Every German soldier is to be filled and fired with the vital spark of the National Socialist creed.'<sup>45</sup>

Waging ideological warfare had—as it already had in 1917–19<sup>46</sup>—five ingredients: *First*, the battle had become one for existence, a struggle between two views of the world. The leadership demanded holding out unquestioningly, and that its military fight the war to an end. The urge to conquest was lost behind the official image of the war, which had the Germans defending themselves against an enemy who showed himself savagely devoted to destroying the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This they raised to an ideology, while the soldier was at the same time endowed with a twofold mythical validation—as a member of that *Volksgemeinschaft*, and as a warrior at the front. The way the war ended seems to bear out the effectiveness of this psychological approach to command: what had happened in November 1918 did not happen again in May 1945.

*Secondly*, the behaviour-forming measures included social control through the threat of punishment. While the first ground explaining the motivation to fight involved positive factors, this repression highlights a negative aspect. Wehrmacht justice was no oasis of the rule of law. This long-cherished belief, which forms part of the later image of the Wehrmacht as a last outpost within the lawless Nazi regime, has long been shown to be fanciful.<sup>47</sup>

Decisive for the role of military justice in the Second World War are the widening of its jurisdiction and the change in legal practice. Both are typical of the shift in the scope of military jurisdiction under way during total war, such that it is possible to speak of totalization or radicalization<sup>48</sup> (here too the influence of the 'stab in the back' legend can hardly be exaggerated). The *Kriegsstrafverfahrensordnung* (KStVO, Wartime Criminal Proceedings Order)

an almost desperate clinging to hope. The opposite was so inconceivable!!! Was all the effort, all the blood, all the other mental and material sacrifice to have been for nothing?!? Unimaginable, we thought!' — Jürgen von Samson-Himmelstjerna, 1945. 'Ein Jahr in Briefen und Tagebüchern', BA-MA MSg 200/1195.

<sup>45</sup> OB HGr S. Ukraine, Generaloberst Schörner, special order No. 12/44 of 18 June 1944, *re* Midsummer celebration 1944 (copy), BA-MA RH 15/333, 22.

<sup>46</sup> See Förster, 'Weltanschauung als Waffe', 297–300.

<sup>47</sup> See Messerschmidt, 'Deutsche Militärgerichtsbarkeit'; Messerschmidt and Wüllner, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz*.

<sup>48</sup> Thus Jahr, 'Militärjustiz', 324.

of 17 August 1938 did indeed extend considerably the scope of military legal jurisdiction. Since 1898 military justice had been a special jurisdiction in that it made all military personnel subject to it in respect of offences of all kinds, thus removing them from the purview of the civil courts. For all the differences in procedure the military tribunal was still, as a legal venue, within the framework of the rule of law; the highest court martial in Berlin was the counterpart of the Reich supreme court in Leipzig. Only in the field, and for mobile units, was there a simplified procedure.

This difference was now eliminated; the simplified procedural law applied not only at the front, but at home as well. Furthermore the KStVO's scope was drawn wider: henceforth it also covered, for instance, those liable for military service but not yet called up, as well as anyone accused of espionage, guerrilla activity, high treason, or 'undermining fighting morale'. A convicted soldier could besides be handed over to the RSHA for the punishment to be carried out.

The radicalization of military justice can also be seen in a change in legal norms.<sup>49</sup> The 1872 *Militärstrafgesetzbuch* (MStGB, military penal code) was taken over in the main, although the principle of general prevention, punishment with the purpose of deterring others from committing the same offences, made its appearance as part of the Nazi concept of law. In 1939, before the war began, actions directed against the Wehrmacht were given special attention by the *Kriegsstrafrechtsonderverordnung* (KSSVO, Wartime Criminal Law Special Ordinance) and the KStVO already mentioned. Paragraph 5 of the KStVO created a new criminal offence: 'undermining fighting morale', by showing unwillingness to serve or refusing to serve, or by inciting these, invited the death penalty. To this was added on 1 November a paragraph 5a, which criminalized a very wide range of disciplinary offences as 'conduct prejudicial to discipline' (*Manneszucht*), and allowed penalties going beyond what had previously been normal. Finally, a further category in the Nazi concept of law was, from 31 March 1943 onwards, 'sound national feeling'. Anyone offending against the 'security of the Reich' or the 'German conduct of the war' was risking life imprisonment or the death penalty.

From 5 May 1944 those who had committed offences prior to the introduction of paragraph 5a could be prosecuted retrospectively—despite the legal principle of *nulla poena sine lege*. The principles of law were turned on their head from the moment when it was no longer a question of culpable behaviour by an individual and the resultant non-observance of the norm, but of the non-observance itself being culpable. Something like mental illness was no ground for exemption from guilt but became, within the ideological context of social Darwinism, a crime in itself that could be expiated only by 'elimination'. The increasing severity of the penal norms, the creating of special legislation, the simplifying of the judicial processes, the going outside the framework of

<sup>49</sup> Thus Jahr, 'Militärjustiz', 326–8.

the law—in the Nazi state Wehrmacht justice, too, had the basis of the rule of law taken away from it.

This was seen not least in the administration of justice.<sup>50</sup> A comparison with the quite mild sentencing practised during the First World War shows clearly the terrifying extent to which military justice became harsher between 1939 and 1945. This reached its zenith in the final phase of the war with the ‘flying drumhead courts martial’. Based on court martial sentences,<sup>51</sup> the total of 9,732 death sentences carried out up to 31 December 1944, with 8,000 in the army alone, is eloquent evidence. Projected to cover the entire war, the number of such sentences carried out is put at 15,000 to 20,000.<sup>52</sup> Against this, 150 death sentences were handed down in 1914–18, though only forty-eight carried out. In both cases, the meting out of military justice had no decisive influence on the course of the war.

How can this development be explained? And who was responsible for it? First of all, there is no way of escaping the realization that sentencing practice cannot be traced directly to the constraints of the Nazi state. It is true that Wehrmacht judges were under pressure from the political leadership; but they nevertheless still had a certain freedom of action, of which as a rule they made no use or used to the soldier’s disadvantage. In the war the judges, in handing out sentences, instead put their own stamp on what they knew to be the intentions of the legislators. Hitler’s decree of 14 April 1940 did, in a move to standardize the administration of justice, indicate the cases in which a death sentence was called for, but at the same time it left a power of discretion and did not inevitably mean an increase in the number of such sentences.<sup>53</sup>

Then it has to be said that the harshening of legal norms and of the administration of justice was in no way a direct consequence of the move to total war. How, if it were, would one explain the fact that military justice in the United States, Britain, and France during the Second World War did not become one based on terror? In the USA 146 death sentences were carried out, in Britain forty, and in France 102. (On another page we examine justice in the Red Army, where according to Soviet sources 994,300 soldiers were sentenced, most of whom were sent to penal battalions where there was little chance of surviving.<sup>54</sup> The official Russian account tells of around 175,000 having been executed.) The way matters developed in Germany has more to do with the specific significance of the defeat suffered in the First World War. In the 1920s and 1930s it was taken by many as accepted fact that the military courts, by being over-lenient, had been partly to blame for the disaster of November 1918. The military jurist Erich Schwinge conjectured in 1933 ‘that the outcome of the great struggle between the nations would most probably have

<sup>50</sup> See Haase, ‘Wehrmachtangehörige’; Ziemann, ‘Fluchten’; Messerschmidt, *Was damals recht war; Die anderen Soldaten; Opfer der NS-Militärjustiz*; Walmrath, *Iustitia et disciplina*.

<sup>51</sup> See on the other hand Seidler, *Die Militärgerichtsbarkeit*, 9–10.

<sup>52</sup> Haase, ‘Wehrmachtangehörige’, 480.

<sup>53</sup> See Jahr, ‘Militärjustiz’, 330.

<sup>54</sup> See Krivošeev, *Soviet Casualties*, 92–3.



been different if the spread of certain symptoms of disintegration in 1917 and 1918 . . . had been countered as energetically as they were in other countries'.<sup>55</sup> Somewhat later Ludendorff spoke again of the mistake made by the old military tribunals in punishing desertion with a custodial rather than a death sentence, thereby keeping men away from the front line. From this he deduced an unequivocal requirement: 'In the struggle for the life of the nation, swift, sure and inexorable punishment of all offences against discipline by virtue of special laws is necessary.'<sup>56</sup> Here too, therefore, the 'stab in the back' legend was setting the tone. The military courts now, from 1939 on, made sure they would not again lay themselves open to the accusation of not having done enough to act against the signs of collapse. This attitude lay behind the far-reaching identity of interest between National Socialists and the Wehrmacht jurists—although Hitler himself had little time for the military courts. The fact that the court proceedings were ultimately only to lend the rule of terror the appearance of legality was a result of this agreement, and thus not a consequence but rather a feature of total war.

Wehrmacht soldiers known as the 'problem children' were also targeted. The problem of 'war nerves' was familiar enough to army psychiatrists from the years between 1914 and 1918, so from 1939 on they took precautionary steps and kept an eye on recruits whose behaviour attracted notice. A war of blitzkrieg movement differed from the positional kind in that it led more to psychosomatic symptoms, cardiac and circulatory disorders, and gastrointestinal problems.<sup>57</sup> Soldiers whom a psychiatrist certified as incapable or recalcitrant were discharged and frequently moved to a psychiatric hospital, where they were at risk of 'elimination'. Or they were posted to special units for punishment and reform, and if their behaviour did not change moved to a military prison or to a concentration camp.<sup>58</sup> Death was also waiting for conscientious objectors, deserters, and others 'undermining fighting morale'. The greater harshness of the military tribunals (and the limits to Wehrmacht propaganda) can be seen in the fact that by the end of the war some 23,000 death sentences for desertion had been passed, and at least 15,000 of them actually carried out.<sup>59</sup>

Thirdly, the importance of training as an essential ingredient of preparedness for combat must be emphasized.<sup>60</sup> A soldier in the twentieth century gained experience less in battle than during training. This served not only at a more superficial level to teach the men how to handle their weapons (and

<sup>55</sup> Schwinge, *Die Entwicklung der Manneszucht*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, 104; see his admonition that in a future total war the harshest action must be taken against 'noxious persons' (ibid. 81).

<sup>57</sup> See Roth, 'Die Modernisierung der Folter'.

<sup>58</sup> On the special units see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 383–5; Klausch, *Geschichte der Bewährungsbataillone*, 999; id., 'Erziehungsmänner'; id., *Bewährungstruppe*, 500.

<sup>59</sup> Knippschild, 'Für mich ist der Krieg aus', 123; see Wüllner, *NS-Militärjustiz*, 263–330. On summary trial, see Schröder, 'Ich hänge hier'.

<sup>60</sup> On what follows see Strachan, 'Ausbildung'; id., 'The Soldier's Experience'.

to fight off boredom); it contributed far more to instilling in conscripts, while still in their training barracks, a sense of the specialness of being a soldier, and making them feel proudly apart from the 'civvies'. Already behind the front line it welded together groups of men who thanks to their shared training had, once they reached the front, a special sense of belonging together. And it trained them in behaving as a soldier such that every man could, when it came down to it, act and—not least—kill without pause for thought. What in time of peace counted as an unbreakable rule had, for the purposes of preparedness for combat, to be rooted out. In the 1920s the military leadership were, moreover, well aware that the fighting spirit imparted had to be in keeping with the weapons system at any given time. The mere fact of warfare becoming mechanized, with things like tanks and aircraft, had still not improved the quality of their operational use. Men still needed in battle to have a certain minimum ability to act on their own and decide what to do next, and then again carry it out instinctively.

After compulsory military service was introduced in 1935 the period under training was set at one year, and then on 24 August 1936 doubled to two years.<sup>61</sup> When in 1939 the number of army personnel rose from 1.1 to 4.5 million, and by mid-June of the following year reached 5.76 million, the time under training inevitably dropped drastically. The five divisions raised just before war began included soldiers who had had only eight weeks' training. The rapid successes of the campaign in the west and the far lower than expected losses in Poland, Norway, and France then made it possible to raise the troops' level of training even though the training establishments were short of equipment and instructors. With the decision to attack the Soviet Union the time of training given in barracks was over, and large numbers of barely trained or totally untrained men had to pick up their knowledge and skills on the battlefield. Belief in the fundamental superiority of the German soldier complemented—indeed increasingly took the place of—solid preparation for their task. As an OKH training directive put it in February 1941: 'In the forefront stands teaching leaders and men a ruthless spirit of attack, daring and decisive action, borne by confidence in the German soldier's superiority over any enemy and by unshakeable faith in final victory.'<sup>62</sup>

Basic training took place, as it had in 1918, in the replacement army. The army in the field was then to integrate the replacement forces into its troop units. In fact, however, training took place, as the war went on, closer and closer to the front, until finally it was being given in the forward divisions themselves, so that not infrequently it was the instructors who led their men into battle. That up to 1944 the training was nonetheless effective may be gauged from the Wehrmacht's low casualty rate seen against total strength—6.7 per cent in 1941, 10.8 per cent in 1942, and 15.3 per cent in 1943. More than half of all men

<sup>61</sup> Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii, 427, 460.

<sup>62</sup> See Strachan, 'Ausbildung', 281–2, quote from 282.



fell on the eastern front. Not until 1944 did the number of losses rise to 33.9 per cent of total strength (1.8 million).<sup>63</sup> So until 1944, at least, it was entirely possible that the individual soldier's willingness to fight was due to his relatively stable sense of belonging to a 'brotherhood under arms'.

*Fourthly*, one can offer the function of this small fighting community, an aspect that American military sociologists in particular have studied taking the Second World War as an example.<sup>64</sup> The individual soldier was fighting not for an abstract value, nor for the regime, nor for his country, but for his comrades. Only a few of the troops saw a sense to the war, either because they were among the fanatics for Nazism, or belonged in the tradition of Prussian militarism, or—entirely the opposite—were seeking in the Wehrmacht a refuge for 'inner emigration'. For the great majority, however, the comradeship myth offered the kind of symbolic order in which what they were doing 'made sense'.<sup>65</sup> In the war, as a transitional phase—marked by active and passive violence—into a better world, comradeship offered the harmonious ideal of brotherliness, willingness to help one another, and security. When, for instance, a soldier who had lost contact with his unit managed to make his way back to it, 'one could feel that a company really was a sort of little family . . . — a paean to comradeship!': such was the comment by the Protestant divisional chaplain Hans Mühle in his report on experience in the defensive battles in the Don basin in 1942/3, recounting the return of a soldier who had become separated and in whom his traumatic stress had found release in 'floods of tears'.<sup>66</sup> Manliness in war: this was not only 'being hard', it did not mean only suffering and inflicting violence. Manliness was rather more, as a construct and social practice, conceivable only together with its 'soft' (or, if one likes, feminine) counterpart of comradeship. When during the war—and when it was over<sup>67</sup>—men talked enthusiastically of this sharing the soldier's life among comrades, this was thus not only because of the 'hard' masculinity they had given proof of there, but also because the comradeship constantly displayed through established rituals helped them—at least sometimes—to overcome the daily brutality, the emotional deprivation, and the loneliness felt at the front. The egalitarian impetus from this socialization among soldiers fed on the memories of the bonding there had been between front-line troops in the First World War. Even though everything might seem senseless, you did

<sup>63</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 217, 225, 238–9, 250, 270.

<sup>64</sup> Janowitz and Shils, 'Cohesion and Disintegration'. See the survey by Kühne, 'Gruppenkohäsion', and the chapters by Christoph Rass in the present volume.

<sup>65</sup> This is the thesis put forward by Kühne, 'Zwischen Männerbund und Volksgemeinschaft', esp. 187–8. Kühne examines the significance of comradeship for soldiers and its role in the war's 'symbolic order'. See also id., 'Kameradschaft'; id., '... aus diesem Krieg werden nicht nur harte Männer heimkehren'; id., 'Gruppenkohäsion'; id., 'Imaginierte Weiblichkeit'.

<sup>66</sup> Ev. Div. chaplain with the 306th ID, Upper Ukraine, 18 Jan. 1943, copy, 2–3, BA-MA N 241/42, 2. The motivation provided by comradeship can also be seen when stragglers, in spite of their traumatic experience, insisted on going back into action because they needed to 'avenge their mates', *ibid.* 3.

<sup>67</sup> See Echternkamp, 'Kameradenpost'.

not want to let your mates down. This was, in April 1945, the thought in the mind of a member of a *Volksgrenadier* division in East Prussia, whose wife and three children had drowned when the *Wilhelm Gustloff* was sunk in the Baltic. It was obvious to him that he was one of a 'lost bunch', and asked himself if there was any point left to living. What made him carry on fighting? 'Why drag out the misery? . . . But then, there's still the other blokes. Many of them I've known for years. Am I going to leave them in the lurch?'<sup>68</sup> What helped make the day-to-day more bearable for the individual had on the whole a stabilizing effect, in that the outwardly directed acts of violence were to a great extent inwardly compensated for by the occasional gestures of humanity. The tendency of National Socialist ideology was to extend the integrative dimension of the comradeship myth to every *Volksgenosse*—the *Volksgemeinschaft* was, after all, supposed to be a community of comrades of both sexes. Though of course only those meeting the racial criteria counted as a comrade.

The longer the fighting goes on, and the more pitiless the struggle becomes, the stronger the bond between the men becomes. This realization, which developed in the USA already during the war, applied in the Wehrmacht just as elsewhere. Yet, critics argue, what happens when because of heavy casualties no loyalty, no sense of comradeship, is able to develop among the soldiers?<sup>69</sup> And indeed, the long-drawn-out fighting led to new troops repeatedly replacing members of the group who had been wounded or killed, and not infrequently themselves dying before any personal bond had time to develop between the new and 'old' comrades.

The explanations offered are interrelated. The military justice system, too, is a product of the ideology, and Wehrmacht justice was 'in the service of National Socialism'. Political indoctrination was, implicitly or explicitly, part of Wehrmacht training; National Socialist education, above all, created the utterly fearless front-line soldier. In Friedrich Altrichter, who in the 1920s analysed the fighting morale of the German soldiers in the First World War and published his results in 1935,<sup>70</sup> one could read how closely linked the soldiers' material equipment and morale were as factors in their ability to fight. For Altrichter, training the troops was 'not just a matter of imparting technical knowledge and physical skills . . . true soldierly qualities have their roots in the moral sphere; they show themselves in a certain psychological make-up, and show themselves in the utmost belief in one's country, the readiness at all times to give up one's life out of love for one's people and fatherland'.<sup>71</sup> This reflects, undoubtedly, memories of 1918. Unity between the army and the people—here, again, was the lesson learned from defeat. Who could doubt that in future a strong ideological bond was going to be needed to hold the two together? Political education and military training belonged together, even more so after the attempt on

<sup>68</sup> Karl-Heinz Sch., 15 April 1945. 'Der verlorene Haufen', copy, BA-MA MSh 2/242, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 59–105.

<sup>70</sup> Altrichter, *Wesen der soldatischen Erziehung*, 200–2. See Altrichter, *Die seelischen Kräfte*.

<sup>71</sup> Id., *Wesen der soldatischen Erziehung*, 8.

Hitler's life. In a speech to the military and civilian public in Eisenach Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel even declared 20 July to be 'the hour in which the great National Socialist people's army, once and for all invincible cast in its ultimate form, was born', an army that, like the NSDAP, was imbued with its mission of 'fitting the German people ideologically for life'.<sup>72</sup>

To what extent, and at what point in time, the individual factors of indoctrination, the threat of punishment, training, and comradeship served to stiffen fighting morale it is impossible to tell exactly. But there can be no doubt about the fateful outcome: as long as the German troops in the east sought to hold out, those declared to be enemies of the *Volksgemeinschaft* continued to die—in the extermination camps up to 10,000 of them a day.

### 3. GENOCIDAL WARFARE, AND FIGHTING THE ENEMY WITHIN

In western Europe the war was very largely fought according to the international laws of war. There were seldom excesses committed against civilians, for which soldiers could expect punishment under the military penal code. When British, French, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Danish soldiers were taken prisoner, they could count on being treated in accordance with the Hague and Geneva Conventions. In North Africa, too, German troops followed the rules. This is not, however, saying anything about the subsequent occupation policy in western and northern Europe, major features of which were deportation of the Jews and retaliatory strikes against resistance by the occupied population, in the 'partisan war'.<sup>73</sup>

Against this, unbridled violence became, at first most of all in eastern Europe after the attack on Poland, a mark of total war. Here, the laws of war had lost their protective effect. The advancing troops were followed by Himmler's *Einsatzgruppen*, carrying out murder behind the front line. Behind them, too, came the officials of the labour offices to organize the 'work deployment' of east European men and women. In the vast conquered territory the war aims were put into effect not universally (the means to do that were lacking), but in individual regions. From the economic viewpoint plunder served, by providing self-sufficiency, to make up for Germany's isolation from world markets, which was determining the conduct of the war.<sup>74</sup> Economic experts, administrative specialists, Party functionaries, and police departments were to see to it that the Germans were shielded from a blockade, that trauma of the First World War.<sup>75</sup> From the social psychology viewpoint, the plundering of foreign territories was to ensure that the equilibrium of Germany's own

<sup>72</sup> Speech by Gauleiter Sauckel on 6 Aug. 1944 in the Prince's Palace at Eisenach, BA-MA RH 14/12, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Here one need read only Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*.

<sup>74</sup> See the chapters by Volkmann in *Germany and the Second World War*, i.

<sup>75</sup> On occupation rule, see the *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz* series; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I and v/II (chapters by Umbreit).

wartime society would not be shaken; and indeed it did stay relatively stable up to 1944. Here, once again, the experience of the First World War played a part. The danger of another loss of internal stability through hunger crises and inequities in distribution was now to be warded off by shifting the burden onto those in the occupied countries, and simply moving the food problems elsewhere. The war's economic consequences were not felt by the Germans until the closing phase of the war—and after it had ended.

The dominant question as to conditions of warfare and its effect on society becomes especially pressing in respect of the indissoluble link between the war and the Holocaust.<sup>76</sup> The more the decision taken on the 'final solution' emerged, the more the Nazi regime could count on a great many 'ordinary' Germans not just tolerating but also taking part in the murder of the European Jews. It had been seen that most of them had, against the background of developments that they saw as being successful in terms of both domestic and foreign policy and the economy, accepted the legal measures that nullified the emancipation of the Jews, isolated them, and seized their property; and they ended up sharing the view that the Jews were not only not fellow-citizens, but also not fellow-human beings. Anti-Semitism can be understood as, to use Shulamit Volkov's term, a 'cultural code', one that can be used to express rejection of what since the nineteenth century *the* Jews had come to symbolize: democracy and socialism, capitalism and unbridled competition, internationalism.<sup>77</sup> Yet at the same time, still at the time of *Reichskristallnacht* (the 'Night of Broken Glass') in November 1938, the majority of Germans had condemned open violence against the Jews. Smashed shop windows, burning synagogues, Jews beaten up on the street—there were few willing to take part in these public outrages. The fact that only two or three years later millions of Jews were being murdered in eastern Europe is enough to demonstrate the part the war played.

The campaign by the majority society on the minority excluded from the *Volksgemeinschaft* culminated in a genocidal war that eventually led to the mass murder of the European Jews. It is useful—indeed, essential—to look at how anti-Semitism developed after 1914–18. In the First World War the Jews could be confident that they were seen as a part of the national whole that in 1914 had followed Wilhelm II. Leaving aside the census of Jews in 1916, there were no measures initiated or approved *by the state*—and certainly no forcible ones—directed against the Jewish minority. Yet the radicalization of anti-Semitism that reached its zenith in the Second World War had already begun in the First. The 'truce' that had been proclaimed was in fact

<sup>76</sup> See the chapters by Tobias Jersak in the present volume. The results from research into the Holocaust and the world war show, where German war society from 1939 to 1945 is concerned, the value of the overarching question of the influence wars have on the relationship between the bulk of society and the (ethnic) minorities—a subject that until not long ago had attracted hardly any systematic study. See *Minorities in Wartime*.

<sup>77</sup> Volkov, 'Antisemitismus als kultureller Code'; on the dynamic of national identification based on racial theory, see Geulen, *Wahlverwandte*.

a shaky one from the start. The Jews were isolated when, with the war going badly, the mood changed for the worse. But it was not until between 1917 and 1923, against the background of the end of the war and its immediate aftermath, that the 'establishment' anti-Semitism of the Kaiser's empire offering no challenge to the system changed for good into an anti-establishment anti-Semitism directed at the 'Jewish' Weimar Republic. The increasing violence of the post-war years was also evident in the readiness of the anti-Semites to resort to it.<sup>78</sup> The Jews, whether they be orthodox, liberal, or Zionist, were quickly made the scapegoats for the revolution, for the war being lost, and for the desperate post-war situation. Old prejudices were rehearsed afresh; but a new aspect was the intensity of the sinister imagery evoked and the strength of the feelings this released. Among wide sections of society the Jews were seen as the 'Others'—a myth whose key elements were the notion of a 'world conspiracy' and of an 'undermining of the Aryan race'.

It is unclear, however, how far this radicalized anti-Semitism in the 1920s made possible, or accelerated, the rise of National Socialism, and how far the roots of the extermination policy in the Second World War stretch back to the time of the First World War and the inter-war years. What is evident, on the other hand, is that it is a mistake to assume a single cause lying in the 'eliminator anti-Semitism' held to be historically and genetically hardwired into 'the Germans', and providing the reason for their readiness to slaughter.<sup>79</sup> Here, one needs to look more closely at the political socialization and ideological attitude of individual perpetrators. Seen overall, the particular way things developed in Germany has less to do with a diffuse anti-Semitism of the kind that can also be seen elsewhere. It is rather more that among the Nazi elite and the institutions they controlled there was a fanatical 'redemptive anti-Semitism' with which the old elite and large sections of the population did not agree, but whose lethal consequences they nonetheless in practice went along with. Against a background of changing events, radical aims derived from anti-Semitism, racism, social Darwinism, and anti-Bolshevism led—coupled with economic, scientific, and political interests—to the Holocaust.<sup>80</sup>

From the start of the war the Nazi terror-based persecution of the 1930s, which had been aimed at driving the Jews out of the Reich, was given a new and different basis. From 1939, after the attack on Poland, the Nazi leadership no longer needed to pay any heed to foreign observers, and could go ahead with combining war and extermination as part of racial ideology in a genocidal form of warfare. The new war was, as Hitler had left no room for doubt, intended as a 'war of peoples and races'.<sup>81</sup> The massive drive for expansion<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See, on what follows, Bergmann and Wetzel, 'Antisemitismus'; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship* (2000), esp. 94–105. On violence during the post-war years see *Violence and Society*; on the use made of the anti-Semitic variants of the 'stab in the back' legend among the *völkisch* radicals see Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden*.

<sup>79</sup> Goldhagen, 'Hitler's Willing Executioners'.

<sup>80</sup> Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, i. 14–15.

<sup>81</sup> Hitler's speech in the Reichstag, 30 Jan. 1939, repr. in *Deutsche Geschichte 1933–1945: Dokumente*, doc. 126, 163.

<sup>82</sup> See on the foreign policy aims the review of research in Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 134–60.

(another constant feature in German history since at least the Wilhelminian era), racism, and the plundering of the occupied territories to benefit the German population led to the genocide of the Jews, Sinti, and Roma. *Völkisch* anti-Semitism formed the ideological nexus for the war of extermination in eastern Europe.<sup>83</sup>

In conquered Poland, the first area where members of the SS and Wehrmacht came into contact with large groups of Jews, the violence could escalate because anti-Semitic and anti-Polish antipathies amplified each other, and their Polish milieu gave the Jews no protection. The fury displayed by the *Einsatzgruppen* prompted Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz to warn of a brutalizing of the Wehrmacht.<sup>84</sup> Here, again, it is unclear how significant for the excesses were the stereotyped image of the 'eastern Jew' enemy, and the violence that was part of military experience.<sup>85</sup> With the attack on the Soviet Union, however, the terror-based persecution increased substantially in scale. This was far from being a military operation in the normal meaning of the word during which at most a few excesses occurred, as the officers of the general staff sought to make the world believe after 1945. The war had now become a race war, for which the mass shootings of Polish Jews and intelligentsia had finally set the course. It is immaterial here whether one sees this as more of a continuous intensification,<sup>86</sup> or stresses the tipping point at which genocidal warfare took predominance.<sup>87</sup> On the eastern front, between 1941 and 1944, violent war took on a fresh dimension. Once the realization had dawned that the programme of deportation and extermination initially planned for *after* the war would now have to be carried out *during* it in the lands of the Government-General, the Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942 had as one of its main purposes to coordinate the measures for the 'final solution' that had been put in place long before by Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich, and to ensure smooth cooperation between the various authorities so that all Jews living in the occupied countries would now be systematically wiped out.<sup>88</sup> The escalation in the

<sup>83</sup> See Herbert, 'Vernichtungspolitik'. On economic exploitation, administration, and racial policy in the occupied territories see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II (chapters by Umbreit), on the colonial war of plunder in eastern Europe *ibid.*, iv (chapters by Müller).

<sup>84</sup> In 1940 Blaskowitz advised strongly against 'the slaughtering . . . of some 10,000 Jews and Poles in full public view'. Otherwise one would not only be playing into the hands of enemy propaganda, awakening sympathy for the Jews among the Poles, and tarnishing the reputation of the Wehrmacht in Poland. The worst harm risked being done, he said, to the 'body of the German people' through the 'inordinate brutalization and moral depravity that would very quickly spread like a disease through worthy German human stock'. Notes by Generaloberst Blaskowitz for an address to the OKH at Spala, 15 Feb. 1940, repr. in *Deutsche Geschichte 1933–1945: Dokumente*, doc. 177, 236–7. On the role of the Wehrmacht see however Jochen Böhrer, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg: Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt a.M., 2006).

<sup>85</sup> See Pohl, 'Die Ermordung der Juden'.

<sup>86</sup> See Aly and Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*; Aly, 'Endlösung'; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*; Förster, 'Verbrecherische Befehle'.

<sup>87</sup> Sandkühler, 'Die Täter des Holocaust', 45–6.

<sup>88</sup> See Longerich, *Unwritten Order*. On the overlapping of military and ideological war, see *Germany and the Second World War*, iv; on the basics of practical cooperation between the army and *Einsatzgruppen* from the power-relationship perspective, see Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*.



process of radicalization thus took a further and final step. Now, women, children, and the old were also systematically murdered in huge numbers. It was not only men who counted as enemies. Women were killed because they were women and were ensuring the perpetuation of a race that was to be annihilated.<sup>89</sup> Most of western Europe's Jews were shipped to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest extermination camp. As 1942 drew to a close, around 4 million human beings, the greater part of the toll exacted by the Holocaust, had already been slaughtered.

For Germany's warfare in the east the idea of a war of extermination had gained acceptance. Hitler and Alfred Jodl had had the legal conditions adapted early on, in March 1941. On 30 March Hitler had already made it clear to his generals that it was soon to be a matter of a 'struggle between two world views', one in which victory was not enough. Of the Wehrmacht Hitler demanded that it should 'rid itself of the notion of comradeship between soldiers. The Communist never was a comrade before, and will never be one afterwards.' This is the line pursued by the decree on the jurisdiction of courts martial of 14 May 1941 and the 'commissar order' by which Hitler commanded the immediate killing of 'Jewish-Bolshevik functionaries'.<sup>90</sup> In the summer of 1941 the *Einsatzgruppen* of the security police and SD left their trail of blood behind them, as they continued on their way eastward behind the front line.<sup>91</sup> While during Operation TANNENBERG there had still been a lack of clarity between the Wehrmacht, SS, and 'ethnic-German self-protection units' in Poland as to their various areas of responsibility, this seems to have been sorted out in good time for Operation BARBAROSSA.<sup>92</sup> Nothing now stood in the way of the *Einsatzgruppen*'s murderous activities. Members of the military, the only force that might still have brought the Nazi regime under control, not only knew of the genocide but cooperated with those carrying it out; some units of the army and Waffen-SS took a direct part in the genocidal actions. Wehrmacht propaganda had besides well before this revived the older motive of 'Jewish Bolshevism' having been responsible for the debacle in 1918, so as to stir up hatred for the enemy with an urge for revenge.<sup>93</sup> The treatment meted out to Soviet prisoners of war forms a further dimension to this war of extermination. Of the 3 million taken prisoner in the summer and autumn of 1941 alone, around 2 million had

<sup>89</sup> See Bock, 'Gleichheit'.

<sup>90</sup> Förster, 'Verbrecherische Befehle'; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv (chapters by Förster).

<sup>91</sup> On the *Einsatzgruppen* see articles in Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*. On the role of the Wehrmacht and *Einsatzgruppen* in Poland see Browning, *Origins of the Final Solution*.

<sup>92</sup> Safrian, *Eichmann und seine Gehilfen*, 137.

<sup>93</sup> See Förster, 'Verbrecherische Befehle'; Wette, 'Propagandistische Begleitmusik'. See Jeffrey Herf in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II. Mayer, in *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*, takes the contested position that the bogeyman figure of Jewish Bolshevism could be linked with the fear of Bolshevism that was deep-rooted in German middle-class society, and ultimately led to the attack on the Soviet Union. Here, therefore, it is the relationship with the Soviet Union and not racial ideology that is seen as the main driving force; criticizing this view see Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 249–50.

by the February of 1942 died of malnourishment or disease, or had been shot on suspicion of attempting to escape. By the end of the war 3.3 million out of a total of 5.7 million Soviet prisoners of war had died.<sup>94</sup> During the campaign in the Balkans this kind of warfare, directed also at the civilian population, can be generally noted in Yugoslavia and Greece as well—Serbia was soon being reported as *judenfrei* (cleansed of Jews)<sup>95</sup>—and later in Italy and France. After Italy withdrew from the Axis, for instance, some 800,000 Italian soldiers taken prisoner by the Germans were declared ‘military internees’ (IMIs) and drafted into forced labour, mainly in the armaments industry. They came last but one in the prisoner hierarchy, ahead of the Russians. More than half of the IMIs were, contrary to international law, kept prisoner until the end of the war; around 30,000 of them died, less for racist reasons than through the regime’s ‘revenge’ for Italian betrayal.<sup>96</sup>

The national Protestant middle and lower middle class, from which came most of the writers of soldiers’ letters home that reveal something about motives, had long been accustomed to using violence against their opponents in the street battles in the days of the Weimar Republic; a readiness to resort to brute force that can be supposed to have fairly easily continued into the Second World War.<sup>97</sup> If the clear-cut image of the enemy is not, at least not on its own, to be seen as the motive for what was done, then the opposite suggests itself—that the willingness to resort to brutality comes from having only a vague picture of the opponent. In total war the crisp delineation of the enemy became fuzzy the more the enemy was not, in the literal sense of the word, in one’s field of vision. Very seldom was one face to face with the enemy—it is no coincidence that there was a decoration for close combat, where the soldier had been ‘seeing the whites of his opponent’s eyes’. Industrialized, mechanized warfare kept the enemy at such a distance as to be out of sight. And what could strike more fear than an unseen enemy, who could be everywhere? He could be ‘the Jew’, or ‘the Bolshevik’, or—especially—‘the partisan’.

The feeling of being under threat turned the relationship of perpetrator to victim on its head; it allowed the soldier to see himself as the potential victim

<sup>94</sup> *Für die Lebenden: Der Toten gedenken*, 24: by mid-1944 there were all told some 5.7m. POWs. During 1944/5 1.8m. were repatriated, although around 57 per cent of all prisoners perished. Between 1.2m. and 1.5m. were transported to Germany, where at least 370,000 died. See *ibid.* on the international community project to research the fate of Soviet and German POWs and internees.

<sup>95</sup> Manoschek, *Serbien*; Fings, Lissner, and Sparing, ‘... einziges Land’.

<sup>96</sup> For a fundamental study from the German viewpoint see Schreiber, *Die italienischen Militärinternierten*; more, esp. on living and working conditions, in Hammermann, *Zwangsarbeit*.

<sup>97</sup> See Schumann, *Politische Gewalt*. Latzel, *Deutsche Soldaten*, 109–14; Humburg, *Das Gesicht des Krieges*, esp. 82–8. Yet what about the working class? How did socialist and Catholic traditions react to the glorifying of violence during the war? Even if the industrial and agricultural workers, who at least at the start of the war made up a good half of the Reich’s working population, were to accept the view of the violence and the justification for it, the older ones must have had to struggle with conflicting beliefs. Service on the eastern front, in particular, will also have faced socialists among the workers with problems of adapting their ideology. Here, as Ziemann rightly points out (‘Vergesellschaftung’, 753), many questions have still to be answered.



of his omnipresent opponent, and justified his using force as a preventive measure. A man in immediate danger of being attacked is allowed to act in self-defence. This internalized interpretation of using violence provided one of the conditions needed for removing the limits to wielding force.<sup>98</sup>

To this obsessive fear, stoked by propaganda, was added a second mechanism: the individual felt himself now scarcely involved in the killing process. By the Second World War at the latest, the whole business of killing had become, par excellence, an example of division of labour—one has only to think of the innumerable ‘agencies’ taking part in the various phases of the deportation and murder of the Jews. The less the individual had to do with the vast whole, the less he felt himself responsible, and the less empathy he could feel with the people dying in their vast numbers at the end of the process. These two mechanisms led to an indifference to the suffering of the victims that paved the way for the unleashing of brute force in war, and entrenched it in the everyday.

In the war, millions of men became used to killing. Take, as an example, Cpl. Willy Peter Reese, a trainee bank clerk from Duisburg, called up in February 1941 at the age of 20, and in the autumn of that year sent to Russia. Reese was among the 399,102 killed, missing, and wounded suffered by Army Group Centre during the Soviet Operation BAGRATION alone (it lasted from 22 June to 29 August 1944), while the Red Army lost 770,888 men.<sup>99</sup> In his diary he painted a picture of the horror of war, whether it was the murder of Soviet prisoners of war or the killing of German wounded by the Cossacks. He also recorded the erosion of his own values, and his growing indifference towards the death all around him.<sup>100</sup>

Something that is punished in peacetime counts in war as service to the fatherland deserving of a medal. This principle—a paradox with which war has been tainted since ancient times—has affected an ever-larger number of men since mass armies and wars between nations began, and has been boosted by nationalism. But the specific barbarisms of 1939–45 did not stem from this general link alone; it was far more the bloodthirsty orders of the political leaders that ushered in the war of extermination and further lowered the threshold of people’s scruples without meeting any real resistance. Hitler, as a charismatic leader, was able to achieve the level of mass murder because his notorious hatred provided umpteen thousands with a licence to eliminate the enemy.

Yet the various reasons for, and forms of, the acts of brutality cannot be ascribed solely to the expediency of waging a war (as outlined above) that had as its carefully considered strategic aim ensuring the feeding of the German population at the cost of starving the population of White Russia to death.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> See Ziemann, ‘Vergesellschaftung’, 751–2; id., ‘Die Eskalation des Tötens’; Bartov, *Mirrors*.

<sup>99</sup> These documented figures I owe to Karl-Heinz Frieser; see Frieser’s chapter on ‘The Collapse of Army Group Centre’ in *Germany and the Second World War*, viii (still to be published).

<sup>100</sup> Reese, *Mir selber seltsam fremd*.

<sup>101</sup> See Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*.

Would that explain the special cruelty with which women were killed? Against that, one has not least to remember that a brutal act of violence cannot be fundamentally explained through its instrumental nature. True, many acts of violence serve a particular political (or personal) purpose, and the means suitable for this are chosen accordingly. Nonetheless this would be overlooking the multiplicity of emotions involved, and be confusing purpose with cause and reasons. What is to be obtained by the use of violence still says nothing about what has actually driven it, or about the consequences of the action. Seeking, from rational aims, to deduce violence as being the means to an end would be failing to see the dynamic of the process of violence.<sup>102</sup> It is on the other hand quite likely that in the multi-ethnic areas of White Russia the occupation released tensions that set the stage for the violence.<sup>103</sup>

Study of particular perpetrators and groups of perpetrators such as Reserve Police Battalion 101 shows how densely intermeshed the causes can be in an actual situation.<sup>104</sup> An anti-Semitic disposition, ideological indoctrination, and economic and political factors came into the picture just as much as factors connected with the war. It was not just that the killing had been declared legitimate. Looking after one's own safety and needs, the fight against the lurking partisans, the planned *Umwolkung* (ethnic transformation), protection against disease—all these structural and situational elements shaped German occupation policy in the east.<sup>105</sup> Group pressure, obedience to authority and faith in the Führer, opportunism, and fatalism created the conditions necessary from one case to the next. In other words, anti-Semitism on its own is not sufficient to explain the acts of violence. Letters home reflecting myriad aspects of simple soldiers' experience of the war display, besides, very few traces of anti-Semitism. Confronted with the miserable conditions in which people in eastern Europe lived, a small minority of them reacted, especially at the start of the war, by seeing them as subhuman. The 'reality' of living conditions seemed to them to bear out the image presented in the propaganda. Expressions of hatred, on the other hand, are almost never found<sup>106</sup>—and that in spite of the soldiers' earlier indoctrination and the blanket propaganda that surrounded the attack on the Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism here supplied the code word for the impoverishment, starvation, and overpopulation in Poland rather than for Bolshevism, the 'Asian menace', and the partisan war in the Soviet Union.

<sup>102</sup> Sofsky, 'Das Paradies der Grausamkeit', 23–4.

<sup>103</sup> See Bernhard Chiari in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II, and his *Alltag hinter der Front*.

<sup>104</sup> On this see primarily Browning, *Ordinary Men* (1999); also Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

<sup>105</sup> See Aly, *Endlösung*.  
<sup>106</sup> What is found can however allow opposing conclusions. The absence might on the one hand be explained by the fact that soldiers as a rule had not a lot to do with Jews or indeed with murdering Jews, and on the other by soldiers wanting to spare their family the details or after a phase of acclimatization not feeling what they were seeing to be worthy of special comment. See in particular the systematic analysis by Humburg, *Gesicht des Krieges*, and also Latzel, *Deutsche Soldaten*; see contra *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung*; criticizing this Humburg, *Feldpostbriefe* (1999).

A question that remains is the role played by the Nazi leadership.<sup>107</sup> Was there an order from Hitler for the genocide? What function did Hitler give, in his strategy, to murdering the Jews? And when were the decisions taken, at the highest political level if that was where it was, that the war was to be conducted as a genocidal one? It has, it is true, by now become indisputable that the war was a necessary condition for the Shoah<sup>108</sup> and was part of the concept of a racial reordering of Europe. Yet the concrete interaction between the course of the war and the Holocaust has not yet been adequately clarified, especially since the needs of the war could lead to a conflict of interests (when it came to providing the trains, for instance). The way the war was going probably did have an influence on Hitler's decision for a war of extermination. The euphoria of early autumn 1941,<sup>109</sup> or, as others believe, the realization that world mastery was no longer attainable, was taken by Hitler as a reason to launch out on the extermination of the Jews.<sup>110</sup> Though initially the process of extermination took different paths in different regions, it was following an overall pattern by summer 1942 at the latest. Part of this involved the emptying of the ghettos,<sup>111</sup> and their people being classified as 'fit for work', 'unfit for work', or 'important to the war effort'—which decided whether the time at which they would be killed would be sooner or later. The war of extermination thus underwent, in 1942, a second stage of radicalization.<sup>112</sup>

The genocide practised in the east seemed to the regime to also have offered the solution for the Jews in the rest of Europe. To this extent the genocidal war in the east had an effect on the fight against the enemy within, culminating in the industrialized mass murder of Europe's Jews, two-thirds of whom did not survive.

Conversely, more and more Germans back in Germany itself began to get the feeling, from the winter of 1941/2, that one day the atrocities would rebound upon them. But the fear of vengeance was paradoxically one of the driving forces behind the continuing of the brutality right up to the spring of 1945. The killing was, admittedly, going on in places far away, most of which had been Polish. The six big extermination camps had been built there from the autumn of 1941: at Auschwitz (which was part of the Reich)

<sup>107</sup> See on the arguments the survey 'Hitler and the Holocaust' in Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 82–105.

<sup>108</sup> The fact that there was genocide in the First World War as well (that of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire) poses the question of whether genocide is the ultimate consequence of war becoming a total one, and is thus one of its features. On this see the forthcoming publication *The Ultimate Horror: Total War and Genocide. Some Reflections*, ed. Stig Förster and Myriam Gessler.

<sup>109</sup> See Browning, *Origins of the Final Solution*.

<sup>110</sup> This is the central thesis of Jersak, 'Die Interaktion'. See Jersak's chapters in the present volume; also Förster, 'The Relation between Operation Barbarossa as an Ideological War and the Final Solution'. Hitler's role in the policy on the Jews is also emphasized by Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, i.

<sup>111</sup> On life in the ghettos of eastern Europe see Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*.

<sup>112</sup> See Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 23; Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*.

and Majdanek in September, Belżec in October, Chelmno in December, Sobibór in March 1942, and Treblinka in July 1942. Up to 10,000 had to die every day. The street scene in a great many large cities, on the other hand, included not only innumerable men and women forced labourers but also work squads from the external camps of the concentration-camp system. Since the regime however kept the mass murder itself secret—SD reports indicated that it would otherwise, given the ambivalent mood among the population, have placed its legitimacy at risk—the majority of Germans probably had no *precise* knowledge of the genocide and its link with the war. Nonetheless it still has to be said that thousands of them made a personal contribution to the extermination process: as members of the SS, Gestapo, and criminal police, as security police and officials in the administration. Hundreds of thousands of Wehrmacht soldiers and of the Reichsbahn's railway workers, without whom there could have been no mass deportations, played their part at various stages of the operation—even if only as observers. Their accounts, in particular the hints they dropped and things they reported in letters to their families, reached an even larger circle back home, where the news of the murderous goings-on at the eastern front spread, in conversations and rumours, further still.

As recent research into the perpetrators has shown, hundreds of experts in a wide variety of fields worked on planning and coordinating the racist population and resettlement policy—on racial imperialism. They included the 500 or so men who in the *Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt* (RuSHA, Central Office for Race and Resettlement) were involved first in ensuring the 'racial purity' of the SS, before the racial specialists moved on to checking the population in the annexed territories. The experts, academically trained in the humanities or agrarian economics, holding key positions and with experience of serving in the First World War, and those in the middle and lower ranks of management who were the children of that generation, were acting as they did out of conviction. They worked out resettlement plans for the conquered territories, managed the resettlement and expulsions, and coordinated the settlement projects. And it was their verdict that was sought when it had to be decided whether a forced labourer accused of sexual relations with a German woman was to be sentenced to death or not.<sup>113</sup>

Even though the removal of all barriers to brutality cannot be explained by the efficient work of those in charge, the shift to total war would have been hard to bring about without the reports from the officials, without the analyses by the academics—without the professionals.<sup>114</sup> They included the demographers, the town planners, the economists, the statisticians, and even the

<sup>113</sup> See as a collective biography of 100 'race experts', and for an account of racial policy plans for a new European order, Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut*.

<sup>114</sup> Aly and Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*; Aly, *Endlösung*; Aly and Roth, *Die restlose Erfassung*.

historians.<sup>115</sup> They valued their academic independence—very few thought of joining the NSDAP—and focused their minds on how many farm workers Germany needed to be self-sufficient, how survival in time of war was achieved, how the demographic ratios were to be controlled. Behind the dry statistics and matter-of-fact jargon of the economist lay concealed the human misery of a population policy one of whose tools was to let millions of ‘useless mouths’ starve to death. The experts supplied the necessary plans with all the meticulousness of a scientist. These ‘scientific soldiers’<sup>116</sup>—the term used by Friedrich Zahn, president of the German Statistics Society, in 1941 to describe his colleagues—employed the methods of modern bureaucracy to support the self-mobilization of the Germans. With the 1939 national census, for instance, the Reich Statistics Office provided the data with which the war could be planned better, at home and abroad. In the final stages of the war the experts of the Office for Reporting and Registration were trying to design a unified data-gathering system; this however failed because they had no way of permanently storing the flood of information.

The killing of the sick, too, would not have been possible without the bureaucrats and doctors doing the dirty work of the Nazi health policy. Brutality in language, reaching its peak in the phrase ‘lebensunwertes Leben’ (life unworthy of life) and the image of the parasite, led on to a language of brutality to which hundreds of thousands of Germans fell prey.<sup>117</sup> From compulsory sterilization the path led on to the ‘euthanasia’ killing of the physically handicapped or mentally ill, and of all those who did not fit into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and were unfit for working or fighting.

German health policy was not adequately prepared for a long war. The needs of the civilian population had to take second place to those of the Wehrmacht. As a result, their share of doctors, drugs, and hospital beds fell drastically; the number of doctors still working in the civilian sector, for example, went down to around 60 per cent of its pre-war level. At first there was no central controlling body, because the Reich health leader Leonardo Conti and civilian medical administration were unable to prevail against the demands of the Wehrmacht; this changed somewhat only after Karl Brandt was appointed as Hitler’s plenipotentiary and as general and Reich commissar for medical services and health matters. From 1943 on, the bombing created ever larger gaps in the medical services network in the cities. As the war went on, the health sector became a tool used to meet the needs of the war. A principal task of health policy was to make sure that as many people as possible were available

<sup>115</sup> Aly, *Macht*; on the writing of history as a legitimizing discipline see Schönwälder, ‘Taking their Place’; Kröger and Thimme, *Erdmann*; Oberkrome, *Volks Geschichte*; Roth and Ebbinghaus, ‘Vorläufer des “Generalplan Ost”’; Benz, ‘Generalplan Ost’.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted from Aly and Roth, *Die restlose Erfassung*, 19.

<sup>117</sup> On the relationship between war and health policy, and on the institutions, persons, and health-policy decision-making processes and areas of action, see Süß, *Der Volkskörper*; Kater, *Doctors under Hitler*.

for war work. The 'fight against the flight into illness' was served by an expansion of the system of independent assessing doctors and 'health management' in the factories. The longer the war lasted, and the scarcer resources became, the harsher became the process of displacement, where those fit for military service pushed aside sick civilians, those potentially productive elbowed out those who were 'unusable' in the war industry, and the infirm and elderly ousted the psychiatric patients.<sup>118</sup>

#### 4. DEATH ON THE HOME AND FOREIGN FRONTS: WAR AND THE CULT OF THE HERO

Nothing was to bring people so close to the conflict as the war from the air, for the citizen could no longer let the soldier die on his behalf. The war to come would force the whole *Volk* to fight for survival—this was the idea that had enthused Alfred Rosenberg in 1930. This Nazi ideologue, who after a muddled look back at history felt he could celebrate the awakening of the 'soul of the race' under the swastika, had no doubt that another war was going 'to be all about air fleets': 'the target for gas and high-explosive bombs will always be the big cities . . . fate imposes on us today just as in former times [i.e. the time before professional armies] that the *whole* nation must share in the fight for survival . . . technology has recreated the age-old organic bond between *Volk* and war.'<sup>119</sup> And indeed modern air warfare did lead to the limits on war being lifted so that its effects went well into the civilian sphere. The bomb as a means of waging total war matched the thinking on total war. The air raid accordingly counted among the most searing and lasting experiences of war for millions of people—in western Europe, in Britain, in Japan, and in Germany. Here, at least, this has to be classed as a phenomenon in societal history.<sup>120</sup>

Warsaw, Rotterdam, Coventry—the names of these cities tell of raids by the Luftwaffe on a civilian population that were aimed less at a military target than at breaking the enemy's morale. In the autumn and winter of 1940/1 Göring had a dozen cities in southern and central England attacked by bombers flying from the Channel coast of France. The tally of civilians killed in air raids during the Battle of Britain came to 23,000, including 14,000 in London alone. A further 18,000 were killed by the Luftwaffe during the spring of 1941 before, after its first defeat, it turned its attention to the east. In the Reich, the bombing of Mönchengladbach on 12 May 1940 ushered in a gradual change

<sup>118</sup> Süß, *Der 'Volkskörper'*, esp. 186, 192, 242–68, 269–91, 409–10.

<sup>119</sup> Rosenberg, *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 557–8. The Germans would be forced, militarily, to destroy metropolises. Rosenberg came to the conclusion that in town planning everything of importance should be hidden underground in concrete casemates.

<sup>120</sup> Dealt with extensively by Ralf Blank in the present volume, and on air war by Horst Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi and vii, as well as viii and x (the two latter still to be published).



in the experience of war that led to living conditions for more and more people on the home front worsening, and to their losing their sense of safety. While the Luftwaffe was striving to bombard the British coastal defences in preparation for a landing on the island, the British decided in the summer of 1940 to wage a strategic air war.

Yet the large-scale raids did not come until 1942. Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris, from 22 February 1942 the new chief of Bomber Command, switched the British strategy in force from the middle of that month to destroying centres of population by fire in order to strike at the morale of the enemy's civilian population—from January 1943 onwards in a combined offensive with the US Air Force. From mid-1943 the British attacked by night, and the Americans (who at first rejected area bombing) by day. The RAF dropped its lethal loads over Essen, Cologne, Lübeck, and Rostock. In May 1942 Cologne had to suffer the first 1,000-bomber raid, and in July and August 1943 some 30,000 people died in Hamburg during two waves of attacks. After the raids on Hamburg even the NSDAP was fearful for the population's will to carry on. Living through the first raid breeds defeatism (as was shown by American surveys after the war), but after that renewed attacks instead deaden the feelings, leading to indifference, melancholy, and exhaustion. Yet the nineteen big raids on the Reich capital between August 1943 and March 1944 failed to set Berlin on fire as had happened to the cities in the Ruhr and Hamburg—it did not have the kind of densely built medieval centre that would have made a firestorm and sea of flames possible.

The raids on Cologne and Hamburg, and towards the end of the war on Dresden, that hold pride of place in post-war memories were not typical of the bombing. Typical raids were the repeated large-scale ones on medium-size historic cities like Braunschweig, where a dozen attacks left 2,905 dead and a third of the buildings destroyed. The bulk of damage was suffered by 158 medium-sized cities, from the light, stick-type incendiaries and heavy, fragmenting high-explosive bombs.<sup>121</sup> It was a war of fires, and not as had been feared a gas war, that accounted for a hitherto unknown level of death and destruction. As a result of the daily area bombing, more than 600,000 civilians had died by 1945, most of them women, children, and the elderly.

Those who survived found themselves faced increasingly with the chaotic living conditions on the home front. The Nazi state attempted, with its air-raid protection system, to shield the German population from the battle going on above their heads; for the rest, people tried to find shelter in tunnels, slit trenches, bunkers, or cellars. Yet even when facing death not everyone was equal. Not least among the reasons why a disproportionately large number of prisoners of war died in the Allied air raids is that access to the shelters was often made difficult for them, if not indeed forbidden.

<sup>121</sup> In this respect one can agree with Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 119.

During the bombing war the cellars of the cities saved untold thousands from certain death out in the open. But they were at the same time where most of the casualties died—buried alive, through carbon-monoxide poisoning, or incinerated in a firestorm.<sup>122</sup> In many places, because the capacity of the cemeteries had long been exhausted, the dead were buried in mass graves—a practice Hitler was still forbidding in February 1944. In other cities like Dresden or Pforzheim the bodies were cremated in full public view; if necessary they were disposed of with flame-throwers provided by the Wehrmacht.<sup>123</sup>

Both the state and the Party cared for the needy. After a big raid reception centres were opened on the outskirts of a town. The NSV (National Socialist People's Welfare) took on the task of arranging temporary care of the 'totally destitute' by setting up catering points inside the town and distributing drinking water from tanker trucks. Other Party organizations like the BDM (League of German Girls), the NS-Frauenschaft (National Socialist Women's Groups), or the 'social offices for air-raid victims' dealt with those who had been bombed out of their homes. Coping with the needs in an emergency made for a bond between the victims and the government. Anyone taking advantage of the situation had to count on draconian punishment. Since the order on 'public vermin' (offenders against war regulations) of 5 September 1939 there had been the offence of 'crimes during air attack'; this involved mainly petty theft committed in a town's darkened streets—what was known as 'blackout crime'. Someone filching a pair of shoes from the wreckage of a house could expect harsh treatment from a special court and, possibly, a death sentence.<sup>124</sup> Here again, this was a symbol of terror in the administration of justice, concerned not primarily with exacting atonement for a wrongdoing but rather with tackling a whole class of perpetrator and 'discouraging the others'.

The idea that the bombing campaign would trigger a political crisis so that the war could be quickly brought to an end turned out to be a miscalculation. Ever since the First World War, British and American military experts had taken it for granted that an enemy population would, under the pressure of bombing raids, force their government to sue for an armistice—an expectation that, based on false premisses, was not fulfilled.<sup>125</sup> Conventional air attacks of low or medium intensity lead those suffering them to anger and hatred of their persecutors; heavy raids generate apathy, not rebellion.<sup>126</sup> The less there is to

<sup>122</sup> Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 376–8. It is characteristic of Friedrich's treatment that he therefore refers to the cellar as a 'crematorium' (p. 388); his choice of this word, whose connotation in the context of death and the Second World War is that of the mass murder of the Jews, wrongly insinuates (if not states) an equivalence between the two phenomena. On the percentage figures, see the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, v. 1, 50.

<sup>123</sup> On the collection of corpses, see Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 427–35.

<sup>124</sup> See Mechler, *Kriegsalltag*.

<sup>125</sup> So Chuter, 'Triumph of the Will?'

<sup>126</sup> See for example the SD report of 20 July 1944, saying that 'air attacks as terror' were not affecting public mood as lastingly as they had before. 'They bring rather to the *Volksgeossen*



lose, the greater the determination to hold out; the sacrifices already made must not have been in vain. Thus the bombing enhanced the regime's stability, rather than undermining its legitimization.<sup>127</sup> When propaganda spoke of 'terror raids', it was wholly in line with what those affected had experienced. While a great many Germans were demoralized, they were concerned more with survival than with resistance to the regime. A front-line soldier at the end of 1944 on his way from Courland to the military hospital in his native Badenweiler was as horrified as he was astonished at the impression he got of everyday conditions on the home front, and told of the readiness to carry on amid the rubble.

The railway journey right across the Reich was a shattering cross-section view of the war at home . . . the ruins of Berlin, Magdeburg, Frankfurt. In the early morning in the capital's suburban trains one saw dead-tired faces, women with sleeping children in their arms making their way home from the air-raid shelters. On the streets a milling throng of people, and when you looked at them it was hard to comprehend how they were living and working among the ruins and burnt-out shells of buildings. Foreigners, flat-faced ones from the east and dark-skinned ones from the south and west, behaving in the streets and in the stations as if they were quite at home. Germany was a pile of rubble. But people were working, and working hard. In the factories the machines were running, even when the windows and roof were missing. The fields were being tilled.<sup>128</sup>

However, the great majority of Germans, or at least some 50 million of them, never or hardly ever had to suffer the bombing. If a bomb fell on their town or village, that was more by chance. The raids were on selected cities. Nonetheless millions of people were indirectly affected through the evacuations, without suffering from the bombing at first hand. The trek by those bombed out of their homes brought the air war into the countryside, so that wide sections of the *Volkgemeinschaft* shared, whether they wanted to or not, in the experience of the urban home front. If only to justify their own wretched state and need, those who had been bombed out talked a great deal about what they had undergone; and in doing so, they naturally tended more to exaggerate than to play things down. As those who had so far been spared believed what the evacuees were telling them, the ability of official propaganda—which kept quiet about the true extent of the damage—to persuade them otherwise suffered accordingly.

As a result of the war from the air, the expression 'the home front' changed from being a metaphor used by propaganda to become a description of the actual day-to-day war inside Germany. Through the Allies' limitless bombing

almost exclusively no more than the depressing awareness of the enemy's superiority': in *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6657.

<sup>127</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 316; see Heuser, *The Bomb*, 80–5.

<sup>128</sup> Wartime diary of Fritz Hockenjos 1939–47, v. 2 (entry for 8 Nov. 1944), BA-MA MSg 2/4038. See Echternkamp, *Kriegschauplatz Deutschland*.

campaign, 'total war', a pre-war obsession that Goebbels had been using as a propaganda slogan, became a terrifying reality for the Germans too. Even before the Allied armies crossed the country's borders, mass death had arrived inside the Reich. Extremes of violence and the death of thousands were no longer something that happened only at the front. It may be that only the living make up a society; yet the dead were an unseen but nevertheless important part of the social order imagined as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The nation commemorated its dead through monuments and rituals. Anyone belonging to it had to be aiming at swelling the numbers of the 'other' dead if he himself wanted to be among the survivors. Such is the principle of war.<sup>129</sup>

For the propaganda machine, those who died under the bombing were 'the fallen', who had lost their lives 'on the field of honour'. Here at home, as in the fighting on the foreign front, the value of individual suffering was given enhanced standing in the Second World War. People killed in air raids were buried with military honours; their graves were decorated with the Iron Cross. Hans Fritzsche, the general plenipotentiary for broadcasting, in July 1943 described those in the parts of the country being bombed as 'the true heroes of this war, who carry on their brows the invisible oak-leaf garland, before whom one day whole generations in Europe will bow down in tribute'.<sup>130</sup> The deeply rooted notion of an all-embracing, eternal *Volksgemeinschaft* made it possible to give a point to personal loss and suffering in the war, and the older concept of the hero continued to carry a great emotional potential—at least, for as long as the National Socialist idea of national sacrifice was taken to its logical conclusion in order to avoid the merest hint of a suspicion of another 'stab in the back' legend.<sup>131</sup>

Here too the language points to the militarization of society on the home front. Because of their will to endure, civilians were presented to the troops as a model. Belief in victory was meant to help the grieving get over the loss of a loved one. To take one example: on the evening of 17 January 1943 eight inhabitants of the small Brandenburg community of Neuplötzin, a few kilometres west of Berlin, were killed by a bomb jettisoned by an enemy plane on its way back from attacking the capital. The men had imagined themselves safe out in the country. The inscription on a stone cross erected close to their graves in the village churchyard reads: 'They were torn from the midst of daily life by a spiteful death. Faith in victory conquers distress.'<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> See Sofsky, 'Kriegsgesellschaften', 115. Sofsky however narrows the term to cover 'those social forms of which war itself consists', such as that of battle, occupation, or flight. See also id., 'Über das Töten'.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted from Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 409 (the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, iv. 474). Friedrich rightly points to this aspect of Nazi jargon—and preserves it (p. x).

<sup>131</sup> See Eghigian, 'Pain'; Fritzsche, 'Cities Forger'; Behrenbeck, 'Transformation of Sacrifice', 129, 135. Cocks, 'Modern Pain', 108–9, on the other hand emphasizes the erosion of faith in the *Volksgemeinschaft* during the final years of the war, which because of the high number of casualties and poor living conditions had, he says, brought about an 'atomization' of German society.

<sup>132</sup> See report and picture in *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* of 18 January 2003, 18.

In the slogans about holding on, too, pointing out that the circumstances left no alternative to continuing with the fight was merged with calling on the irrational effect of 'belief'. Belief was, as Generaloberst Schörner put it in a special order, 'the most powerful force for life. Victory goes to those who cheerfully and undeterredly have faith in it; and fate favours those who believe.'<sup>133</sup> In like vein Fritz Sauckel, Gauleiter of Thuringia, reinterpreted the 20 July assassination attempt as 'a clash [before fate] between the old, overcautious path of reason and the forces of faith' that had, yet again, been in the right.<sup>134</sup>

The vast extent of the suffering that industrialized warfare was visiting on civilians and soldiers placed the Nazi regime under growing pressure to explain and justify. What for those in authority could grow into a problem of legitimization meant, for the individual, an ever greater danger of mental instability. Both were bound to undermine the willingness and the ability to carry on in the war suffering violence and inflicting it on others. The losses experienced at the front and under the bombing could erode the vaunted unity of the *Volkgemeinschaft*—or strengthen it. Thus Ludendorff had already, with air attacks and supply problems in mind, warned against a lengthy war because the sine qua non for total war, the 'spiritual unity of the people', was put more and more in jeopardy the longer the news of deaths went on. Yet at the same time he saw within this risk an opportunity: 'only when the national soul is strong in this time of peril, and where the right influences are exercised on the people, can its unity be kept up; it can, indeed, become more deeply rooted and intensified.'<sup>135</sup> The danger of death thus threatened the regime, but could at the same time help further the move to total war. To make the experience of violence manageable, to give point to the massive scale of the dying and thus banish the fear of death, a religiously exalted cult of death was created in the Third Reich (as well). The Christian liturgy provided the background of rituals and phrases for a political religion where, by retaining familiar forms of mourning, an honouring of heroes became possible that would create a sense of purpose and community.<sup>136</sup> Idolizing those who had had to suffer a violent death amounted to celebrating that very deadly violence itself. This brought up to date a pattern of interpretation that by the start of the First World War at the latest, and then in the inter-war years, had dominated public pronouncements on dying in war (though voices had been raised against it in the 1920s).

Alfred Rosenberg, for many years editor of the Party organ the *Völkischer Beobachter*, who from 1934 supervised the whole ideological education of the Party, had seized on the importance of the cult of the fallen after 1918, and incorporated its function and symbolism in his racist design for a 'German

<sup>133</sup> BA-MA RH 15/333, 22.

<sup>134</sup> Speech by Sauckel on 6 Aug. 44 in the Prince's Palace at Eisenach, BA-MA RH 14/12, 42.

<sup>135</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, 165.

<sup>136</sup> See Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden*.

religion'. Where monuments and memorials to heroes of the First World War were concerned, he based his programme on the idea that the significance of remembering the dead would, with the passage of time, not diminish but in fact increase. As personal memory faded, the human features of the individual who had fallen would recede into the background, and the dead would become an 'allegory'. Rosenberg saw one form of this de-individualized memorializing of the dead in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to be found in France, Britain, and Italy, which had become a 'mystical centre' for millions. Already 'the coming generation will see, in the war memorial of the First World War, a holy symbol of martyrdom in a new faith'. The memorial to the soldier was to take over the religious function of that to a saint. In Rosenberg's vision, the German villagers gathered on a Sunday not before a shrine to the Virgin Mary, but before 'statues of Germans in field-grey'.<sup>137</sup> The places and times of the dead were sanctified: battlefields and memorials counted as 'holy sites', and the dates of major battles as 'holy days'.<sup>138</sup>

Mourning for the dead was transformed into honouring of the fallen. Its end purpose was the readiness of the survivors to sacrifice their own lives, and the 'German people's army' was to be seen as the historical proof of the readiness to make that sacrifice. More, indeed: the act of dying was a vouching for life—the mysticized continuance of one's own people and the birth of a 'new man' of the Aryan master race. The Nazi 'renewal movement', as Rosenberg portrayed it, showed that numberless people now understood 'what the two million dead heroes are: the martyrs of a new life-myth—in short, of a new faith'. The circle was thus closed. The raising of death to a new and higher life (again, this Christian motif!) and the readiness to die were, according to this central tenet of the creed he was offering, the mark of courage to go on living.<sup>139</sup>

Yet did this offer really find takers? As so often, far less is known of how it was seen by the private person. It is still unclear how far the hero cult actually made it easier, for instance, for those who had survived an air raid to see the maimed bodies, or helped a woman get over the death in battle of a husband or son because this could in spite of everything give the death a 'meaning'. Comfort often came first of all from the man's unit padre, when he could tell the widow or mother of the last hours, or even the last words, of the fallen soldier, and possibly send a photograph of his grave.<sup>140</sup> Many death notices in newspapers set the actual announcement of the death in a military and ideological context that provided the desired secular connotation of purpose without excluding religious references. To give just one example, one such notice in October 1943 announced, beneath the symbol of the Iron Cross

<sup>137</sup> Rosenberg, *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 618–19.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 701. Rosenberg himself was condemned to death at the Nuremberg trials of major German war criminals in 1946, and executed, inter alia for his role as Reich minister for the occupied territories.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 701.

<sup>140</sup> See BA-MA MStg 2/5550, re the numerous enquiries and letters of thanks to the divisional chaplain Ernst Ufer.

coupled with the swastika, that 27-year-old Paul E. had 'according to God's unfathomable will . . . on 23 October 1943 met with a hero's death north-west of Chernikov'. The notice gave details of his final military activity as a unit commander, and listed honours awarded such as the Iron Cross (First and Second Class), the Wounded Badge, and the Eastern Front medal, down to his golden Hitler Youth badge. It went on to paint the heroic image of his death fighting for the *Volksgemeinschaft*. 'At the head of his unit, and through his personal efforts, he halted a fierce Russian attack, giving his life with burning enthusiasm for Führer and fatherland.'<sup>141</sup>

Even though it is not possible to put a figure to data based on personal experience, one may suspect that while stage-managed discourse about the fighting may have resounded loud in public, it was not heard to the same extent in the quietness of the home. The letters in which the women left behind poured out their hearts to the lost son or husband's padre offer a deeper insight than the public announcements of the deaths. Erna S. of Neuruppin, for instance, complained at the end of 1944 that 'my having now to sacrifice my dear husband as well, after having already given my lovely boy who didn't come back from a bombing raid on England on 30 April 1944, is too hard to bear. Yet fate is implacable. God will give me the strength to bear this great suffering.'<sup>142</sup> There is no more mention here of a hero's death. And how cynical must have sounded to her the public reminder by a Gauleiter who at around the same time was like Tacitus recalling 'the most important duty of all mothers . . . to be worthy of the ancient [German] mothers', and prating about the 'fervent passion of German women' who 'urged on their men, as they went into their final battle'.<sup>143</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Protestant theology had known two opposing patterns of interpretation that yielded conflicting views of war.<sup>144</sup> On the one hand war was seen as the emanation of evil; the suffering in war could thus be looked on as man's doing penance. On the other, theologians interpreted war as a war with God's help. They legitimized and glorified the 'German war' in their sermons with the old motto of 'Gott mit uns'—'God is with us'—and enhanced the effect of nationalism by enriching it with religious and Christian elements. The image of God was nonetheless not reduced to that of a Germanic national deity; he remained the God of all men, but in the current historical context was making use of the German people to bring mankind back to the right path.

After 1918, therefore, most Protestants were at first convinced that Germany's defeat had gone against God's will, and that those who had brought it about through revolution were guilty in the religious sense as well. The 'stab

<sup>141</sup> BA-MA MSg 2/5550. The notice itself seems to warrant some doubt, since three of his closest male relatives were evidently 'at present missing', 'at present in captivity', or 'at present in the east'. The widow was one month later (as was also publicly announced) to give birth to a daughter, for her 'a last legacy of my beloved husband'.

<sup>142</sup> Erna S., Neuruppin, 26 Nov. 1944, BA-MA MSg 2/5550.

<sup>143</sup> BA-MA RH 14/12, 45.

<sup>144</sup> On the following see Greschat, 'Begleitung und Deutung'.

in the back' legend was thus bolstered with religious arguments. In the 1920s, however, leading representatives of the Protestant Church like General Superintendent Otto Dibelius became, in contact with the ecumenical movement, persuaded that the Church must speak up for understanding and 'reconciliation', and prevent the further shedding of blood—something that did not rule out armed defence of the fatherland. The younger clergy were inculcated with dialectical theology as advanced by Karl Barth. Concentration on the revelation of God brought everything human down to size, and ruled out the religious extolling of war, a soldier's death, and such earthly values as fame and honour.

In the 1930s the background conditions for the theological interpretations of war did of course change. In the Third Reich religious life was played out at the level of the regional churches. Charge of these lay in the hands of the 'German Christians', except for Hanover (August Marahrens), Bavaria (Hans Meiser), and Württemberg (Theophil Wurm). The splitting-off of the German Christians (initially supported by the Nazis),<sup>145</sup> who through an 'Aryan Reich Church' tried to overcome the breaking up of German Protestantism by the 'Führer principle', drove the Protestant Church to the edge as much as did the 'de-denominalization' of public life pursued especially by Goebbels, Himmler, and Bormann in order to achieve for National Socialism a monopoly over how life and being were interpreted. By 1939/40 those who adhered to the 'Confessional Church', who had opposed first the false teachings of the German Christians and then the Nazi regime's direct incursion into church organization, had thanks to repression lost their influence on the public.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, interest in the population in the life of the Church had been on the wane since the mid-1930s.

At the outbreak of war the attitudes of the German Christians were less typical than expressions wholly in line with the older national Protestantism. On the one hand, so the creed ran, the Protestant Church saw itself as sharing the destiny of the German people, and felt it its duty to serve the *Volk*. On the other hand Bishop Meiser, for example, made it clear to his clergy that they were not to pass on army communiqués but purely to pronounce the gospel. In view of the worsening living conditions, shortages, repression, and dwindling influence, the 'two realms' doctrine offered the possibility of opening access to another, religious reality. Thanks to this theological notion the individual could find in the Church security, hope, and meaning. For the priest the separation of course did also mean that he had no need to involve himself with political matters—a far from unpolitical attitude.

On this basis the majority of Protestant men, including a great many theologians in the Confessional Church, felt it a matter of course to serve in the forces and thereby give proof of their patriotism. An equally deep-rooted anti-Communism provided a further partial identity of interest. To the theologians the attack on the Soviet Union seemed the decisive struggle against

<sup>145</sup> See Bergen, *Twisted Cross*.

<sup>146</sup> See *Kirche im Krieg*.



anti-Christian Bolshevism, fighting for the Christian culture of the west. The idea of duty to the fatherland moreover provided the grounds for unequivocal obedience, and the handing over of responsibility to the leaders of the state. The Lutheran idea of vocation can here be plainly discerned.

With this went the idealizing of the military. To many Protestants the Wehrmacht seemed, especially in the early years of the war, an institution in which Christian values were most likely to be able to protect themselves from National Socialism. The Lutheran ethos applied in war as well. The bishop for the Hanover region, for instance, told his priests in 1943 that 'this war . . . must be waged with unwavering dedication, free of all sentimentality', otherwise one would be in debt to the Redeemer.<sup>147</sup> Letters home from Christian soldiers also reflected this combination of Christianity and military tradition. This reveals a deep-rooted mentality that right into the Second World War gave purpose to, and guided, what one was doing. What happened in war itself formed for many soldiers the terrible background to their own religious experience—which in turn could stiffen their fighting resolve.<sup>148</sup> Desertion and dissent remained the exception.

In trying to make out the basic features of German war society special attention has been given to how it included and excluded, and to the mechanisms for ruling and mobilizing people, as well as to how the violence spread from the front to within society at home, and to discerning general patterns of thought and argument that might wrest some meaning from all that was happening to people in the war. In place of a final summing-up, it seems reasonable to look at events from a different angle that will show the interplay of war and society. Did the war produce an impetus to modernization? This question, which was first posed in the 1960s and then again in the 1980s, looks at a much longer process of transformation that goes beyond the war years and even beyond the twelve years the Nazi regime lasted, not least as it relates to setting the stage for the post-war period.<sup>149</sup> To start with, one must remember the dark side of the modern age. It was specifically modern capabilities that made possible the totalitarian dictatorship of Nazism, the war of annihilation, and *industrialized* mass murder.<sup>150</sup> Any further development is not something in isolation—it

<sup>147</sup> Quoted from Greschat, 'Begleitung und Deutung', 516; ' . . . daß Schuld auf unserem Wege liegt', 96.

<sup>148</sup> See also Beese, 'Kirche im Krieg'.

<sup>149</sup> On this discussion and the premisses of modernization theory see Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iv, 784–94; on the problem of taking the modern age and modernization as a criterion for judgement see also Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 179–81. It is confusing ends with means to think, like Zitelmann, *Hitler*, that the extermination of the Jews and the conquest of *Lebensraum* in the east served in revolutionary fashion to modernize German society. When 'modernization' is divorced from any normal connection, the word loses all analytical value; see the criticism offered by Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 245–6; Frei, 'Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?'

<sup>150</sup> Here the simultaneity of completely different forms of war must be kept in mind. The recent wars in Africa have shown that it is still not impossible for mass murder to be carried out with knives and machetes; and in cruelty and the banalizing of violence these are not all that different from the wars against the colonial powers in the 1950s and 1960s. See, with references to further literature, Herberg-Rothe, *Der Krieg*.

always has to be seen in this context. It was invariably a matter of strengthening the cohesion, and with it the power, of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in order to prevail in the racial war, and never one of the right to opportunity that the democratic state has emblazoned on its banner. Here we can list only briefly, from this viewpoint, the actual changes that occurred in the economy, social structure, and political system.

From 1938 the priority given to armaments, and to waging war, boosted an expansion of key industries on which not even the destruction from the bombing could have any lasting effect.<sup>151</sup> The cost was, to be sure, a high one. The upsurge would have been quite impossible without the exploitation of the occupied countries of Europe and the unprecedented system of forced labour, and the Germans in the end paid a high price through the destruction of their country and the collapse of their currency.

The social structure was marked by an amazing upward mobility. To be sure, the class system determined by the market did not fundamentally change, yet the polycratic system and its machinery for rule gave a great number of National Socialists from varying social backgrounds who were loyal to the Party line careers that would previously have been unthinkable. Thanks to the NSDAP and its various organizations, and the expansion in the Wehrmacht administration, some 1.8 million people reached management positions that would otherwise have been unattainable.<sup>152</sup> The social opening-up of the officer corps has already been mentioned. For workers, who as 'manual trades' acquired new prestige even compared to salaried staff, the DAF (German Labour Front) ensured better working conditions, in small and medium firms in particular; though this did not create a new, standard kind of employee that might have removed the difference between the wage-earners and the salaried. The system of economic control, whose guideline was solely efficiency, subordinated any specific policy with regard to the workers to the general economic goals: first of all overcoming unemployment—by the end of the 1930s there was a shortage of labour—and after that making preparations for war. The DAF organization did less to bring advantages for the workers than to create new forms of social control by the regime and the employers.<sup>153</sup> There could be no question of a genuine recasting of social relationships in the workplace; there, too, the leader principle now ruled. The workers lost the right to organize themselves, to negotiate pay scales, and to move freely within the labour market. Certainly their living conditions did improve, to a minor extent. The success of the Nazi employment policy was for many workers a central part of their experience of the Third Reich; not least of what National Socialism brought for them was jobs. At the end of the 1930s there was even a

<sup>151</sup> On the industrial dimension see also Abelshauser, 'Kriegswirtschaft und Wirtschaftswunder'.

<sup>152</sup> See Armin Nolzen in the present volume.

<sup>153</sup> See Georg Wagner-Kyora in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II; on what follows see Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iv. 731–41.



shortage of manpower, and workers—who unlike farmers and women did not occupy any leading place in the Nazi ideology—had more opportunities for advancement, better living conditions, and growing social prestige.<sup>154</sup> Yet this was down less to any stringent policy than to the effort to prevent the stability of the home front from being jeopardized by unemployment, and to economic planning in a society preparing itself for a modern war.

For the farmers the 1938 *Erbhofgesetz* (farm inheritance law) was the high point of a policy with which the Nazi regime was trying to support the numerous farming families at the expense of large agricultural concerns, though the latter had already been broken up in the days of Weimar. The farm, which could not be sold or burdened with mortgages, remained in the family—though in the long term it tied the farmer to his land. Regulating prices and markets for agricultural produce was designed to promote national self-sufficiency, and guaranteed the German farmer a monopoly. The outcome was still economic stagnation and a loss of mobility. The ideological goal of consolidating the *Reichsnährstand* (Reich Food Estate, a compulsory cartel of all producers of foodstuffs) as the backbone of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was not really translated into agrarian policy. Once the war began, the image of the traditional German farmer certainly had no great further role to play. Here, traditional ideals—just as in the policy on women—clashed with the needs of modern industrial society; and that was the *sine qua non* for the desired military position of strength.

Women working for a living was seen as an evil made necessary by the war. The emancipation of workers and women was in any case hampered by the short-livedness of the DAF. Where the political system is concerned, the change is self-evident: of the constitutional state based on law nothing more remains. Charismatic rule wiped out the modernizing progress of the Weimar days, including not least the participation of men and women in politics and the democratic change of power. If the functions of the state were widened, and the regime developed the social state in things like health provision and the leisure area, this was being done primarily to consolidate itself and make the home front stable, ready for total war. Where those from the lower and lower middle classes rose to positions of authority and partially displaced the old power elite, this was not a matter of successful democratic change of the elite, but rather of a change of direction towards patronage on a grand scale under a Führer's dictatorship, from which anyway only the 'Aryan *Volksgenossen*' profited.

These objective factors are one thing; how matters were seen subjectively is another. National Socialism brought about, particularly in the first years of the war, a change in perception that made many earlier patterns of interpretation obsolete. The social model of the *Volksgemeinschaft* proclaimed by a barrage of propaganda seemed to many people to represent a major move towards a

<sup>154</sup> See Lüdtkke, 'Ehre der Arbeit'.

more equal society. The initial military successes seemed to boost the effectiveness of a homogenized nation-at-arms that, thanks to the means used to stir up popular sentiment, people were made able to 'feel for themselves'. The utopia presented by the propaganda met the deep-rooted inclination in millions of Germans towards a homogenizing view of the social order. The overcoming of class and party-political conflicts had been the leitmotif of social harmony since the middle of the nineteenth century, and had finally been spurred on by the First World War. The National Socialists' social utopia had thus found a fertile soil, and in the war especially it had, via the staggering mobilization of social resources, acted as a force for integration. The fact that most of the opportunities for social advancement were tied up with the totalitarian dictatorship and a policy of waging war was perhaps less clear to people at the time; and if it did prompt doubts, it tended to be rather unimportant. For them, the fact that ultimately the *Volksgemeinschaft* would exist solely in a racially pure Greater Germany was only a vague thought. Against this, loyalty to the regime was fostered by the everywhere-evident full employment that after the Depression years had lifted people out of economic misery. Up to 1942, therefore, most of the *Volksgenossen* could believe that life was better for them than it had been before 1933.

Ultimately, the judgement is mixed. On the one hand the change had as little to do with an intent to modernize as it had with a 'revolution in society'. On the other, not only the regime and the war but the immediate post-war period too did have in many areas a modernizing effect in the normal positive sense, even if it was all really done to back up Nazi rule and war policy. The new attitude to performance and increased mobility, the breaking up of the traditional social milieux and social structures—one need only think of the proletarian subculture, the influence of the Prussian landowning nobility, and the military elite—and finally, too, the total discrediting of totalitarian rule and aggressive war policy were 'modern' elements in a mental and social foundation on which the Germans have been able to build since the late 1940s.

## IV. Principles for and Structure of the Volumes

AFTER this first look at the multifaceted society of the Third Reich during the war, there can be no doubt as to the methodological consequence of taking a multi-perspective approach for a wider examination. The criticism has been levelled at the *Germany and the Second World War* series that in the individual volumes the discussion of methodological premisses, of epistemological interest, and of the sources-base used has been kept to a minimum. So it seems all the more fitting here to give the interested reader at least a brief explanation of the background to its conception. From the very beginning of the series it was clear that a conventional history of war, as well as a history of foreign policy and the conduct of the war, was not enough, and that a military history of the Second World War needed to be a history of the 'society at war'.<sup>1</sup> What at the end of the 1970s was firmly established practice has long since been disputed. This change reflects—how could it be otherwise?—the progress made in the discussion of methodology in history. While Max Weber's macrosociological approach can be glimpsed behind the thoughts sketched out in the first volume and the studies that followed, thirty years later a history of the (German) war society of 1939–45 calls for a range of methods and an interdisciplinarity that have for some considerable time been a feature of the 'new military history', and that do justice to the complexity of the subject.

What has for some long time past been successfully gone through for the First World War (and the first post-war period) must be fruitfully exploited for the Second World War (and the second post-war period): to approach the subject taking paths that cross over the established lines of demarcation between the disciplines. In half-volumes ix/I and ix/II it is not possible to follow all of them, if only because often there is far too narrow a path, or the first breaches have still to be made. The significance the war had for how the Nazi regime functioned, the effect it had on the majority and minority of the population, the consequences the experience of war had for Germans' memories of it and hence for their political culture in the latter half of the twentieth century—in short, the lasting effect this war had on society—stands in striking contrast to the writing of its history.

A comprehensive, solidly based history of society between 1939 and 1944/5 is lacking and needed, and given the research—particularly at local and regional level—still to be undertaken will remain so for quite some time yet. On the one hand the war years, which did after all take up six of the twelve years

<sup>1</sup> See Manfred Messerschmidt, Introduction, in *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 3.

the Third Reich lasted, have in works presenting an overall view, because of other focuses of research, been treated as an appendix, one that can possibly be dealt with in a closing chapter.<sup>2</sup> The war seemed the logical consequence of Nazi rule, and clearly less needful of explanation than the foregoing phases of the 'seizure of power' and the consolidation of rule. The exceptions have made it clear that it is worth correcting this misconception.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the social- and cultural-history dimension has been given less attention in many military historians' accounts of the Second World War<sup>4</sup>—just as if at the moment a man was called up for military service he was moved out of the social historian's territory onto that of the military historian and thus disappeared from the former's field of view. Here too it has already been shown how sensible it is to make no divisions between the social and military histories of the Third Reich, but rather to look for interfaces.<sup>5</sup>

## I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The present Volume IX differs markedly from the others in the series, especially those dealing with the Reich's foreign policy and conduct of the war. Apart from half-volumes V/I and V/II, which offer a theme-based cross-section view of the war administration and economy and the mobilization of manpower resources from 1939 to 1945, their subject matter has been predetermined by the waging of sea, air, and land war in the various theatres at various stages in the conflict—clearly demarcated geographically and chronologically—just as Volume X on the ending of the war can concentrate on a relatively short period of time. Volume IX, on the contrary, tends to embrace the whole area of the Reich and the whole duration of the war, with the extension already described into preceding and subsequent events. How, in the context of a series, are the limits to be drawn for what starts out as an amorphous subject matter? The straitjacket of a uniform interpretation has not been imposed on the contributions of the authors of half-volumes IX/I and IX/II—that would be quite out of the question. Rather, each of them answers in his or her own way the basic question, posed at the outset at a middling level of abstraction, of the interrelationship between war and society that is summed up in the expression 'war society'.

<sup>2</sup> Thamer, *Verführung und Gewalt*, 625–770; Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany*; Fischer, *Nazi Germany*; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*; Hehl, *Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft*. In Ian Kershaw's sound overview of research on Nazism the war is covered principally in the foreign policy chapter, Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*. See the solidly based research report by Kühne, 'Der nationalsozialistische Vernichtungskrieg'; and earlier, Wegner, 'Kriegsgeschichte'. No wonder, then, that this focus finds expression in the compilations of relevant texts for non-German students—see, for instance, the collected work *Nazism*.

<sup>3</sup> Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*; Dülffer, *Deutsche Geschichte 1933–1945*; Herbst, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland*; Kitchen, *Nazi Germany at War*.

<sup>4</sup> See *Der Zweite Weltkrieg: Analysen, Grundzüge, Forschungsbilanz*; Gruchmann, *Totaler Krieg*; Weinberg, *A World at Arms*; Schreiber, *Der Zweite Weltkrieg*.

<sup>5</sup> See *Erster Weltkrieg – Zweiter Weltkrieg*.

Beyond that, harmony between the various contributions, as these were discussed at the preparatory workshop held in February 2002, was to be achieved by employing a particular range of methods; these have included in particular social- and cultural-history approaches that have been tested not only in the military history of the early modern era or the First World War, but also in research into the middle classes or the history of nationalism, and that have been a feature of a 'military history in expansion'.

Summarizing the main points of this development, which forms the present point of departure for Volume IX, will suffice, before moving on to describe the resulting structure and features of the book that stem from its place within a broad series.

Social history has, in the Federal Republic of Germany, had to contend *inter alia* with the earlier political history from the 1950s and 1960s, dominated by an account of events connected with foreign policy, which was seen as of primary importance. Disciplines like sociology and economics now served as a source of fresh ideas. Hermeneutic understanding was supplemented with theory-guided explanation.<sup>6</sup> Since the 1980s the weak points in methodology and lacunae in content were to be remedied by the 'new history of culture'. Military history expanded to take in social and cultural history also involves, on a basis of wide variety of sources, sense constructions, and 'world views'; involves the perception of 'reality' by the actors that guides what they do; involves the capacity for action by the individual ('agency') and thus the individual history of what is experienced (as opposed to superindividual processes and anonymous powers such as the German Reich); involves 'culture' in the sense of a plexus of meanings that takes in the individual; involves the interest, stemming from cultural anthropology, in dealing with the foreign and strange by taking a 'soft' approach, as it were a dense description (to use Clifford Geertz's term); involves collective mentalities; involves social praxis, including political praxis and the construction of relationships of rule; involves giving priority to linguistic events and symbols (even though the linguistic turn in its extreme form has faded long since); and it means, fundamentally, the methodically controlled construction of historical phenomena in the light of the historian's cognition-guiding interests, not their reification in the recital of events. To this end the focus is frequently on the one hand sharpened through looking at local and regional history (which does not automatically mean a loss of relevance), and on the other widened to take a *transnational* perspective (and war is, *par excellence*, a transnational phenomenon).<sup>7</sup>

The extreme form of the 'culturalistic' approach, which allows of no 'reality' outside the text, has lost support; in Volume IX, at all events, social- and

<sup>6</sup> On the synthesis of a 'history of society', in which society is formed from the interactions between economy, rule, and culture, see Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, i. 1–5 (foreword) and 6–31 (introduction); with minor revisions, in Wehler, 'Was ist Gesellschaftsgeschichte?'

<sup>7</sup> Here the citing of relevant literature in support may be dispensed with; see only Daniel, *Kompendium Kulturgeschichte; Geschichte zwischen Krieg und Gesellschaft*.

cultural-history approaches are by and large looked on as complementary. Most of the contributions in this volume take up one or more of these points, such as the analysis of nationalism as a central world view and a potent mentality (Sven Oliver Müller); the detailed examination of the room for manoeuvre available to employers (Georg Wagner-Kyora) and the military dissidents (Winfried Heinemann); the political practices of the NSDAP in the war (Armin Nolzen); a 'close-up' of forced labourers of both sexes in agriculture (Ela Hornung, Ernst Langthaler, Sabine Schweitzer); interest in the content and language of propaganda and less in the history of how it was organized (Birthe Kundrus, Jeffry Herf, Aristotle A. Kallis); the question of dealings at the time with the 'Others' alien to society and the dynamic of the development of relationships based on force (Karola Fings, Tobias Jersak, Oliver Rathkolb, and others); a focus on local and regional history (Ralf Blank, Fings); the choice of a middle way between the micro and macro level for social history (Christoph Rass); and the transnational change of perspective (Bernhard Chiari).

To throw light on the various aspects of German war society in the sense of providing a cultural and social history of the Second World War, the individual contributions follow, *mutatis mutandis*, three conceptual guidelines of recent military history, as mapped out in our earlier overview: first the model of 'total war', secondly the widening of perspective through comparison with the First World War and looking at the war's effects in relevant areas, and thirdly attention to the free rein given to the use of violence.

A model to which historical experience can also be related is *first* the concept, discussed for a number of years past, of *total war*. The term, coined during the First World War, became in the inter-war years a frequent though imprecise catch-phrase, not least in the debate among the military about a future war<sup>8</sup> and under the influence of Erich Ludendorff,<sup>9</sup> before it came to mean the extreme radicalization of the war effort particularly in the second half of the Second World War. The frequency with which 'total war' is talked about is however matched by the lack of any clear definition of it. It is best, therefore, to understand it in the same way as Carl von Clausewitz understood 'absolute war'—as a heuristic instrument or, if the anachronism may be permitted, as an 'ideal type' in Weber's sense of the word (before the conflict theoreticians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries allowed its epistemological content to be lost).<sup>10</sup> This has in particular three closely linked advantages. It opens up a long time-perspective and gives names to milestones in development, it directs attention to social relationships, and it emphasizes the development's dynamic.

The concept places the Second World War, particularly in respect of the aspect of society discussed here, in a longer-term process of development—the

<sup>8</sup> See Deist, 'Die Reichswehr'; Bröckling, *Disziplin*, 241–87; *An der Schwelle zum Totalen Krieg*.

<sup>9</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*.

<sup>10</sup> Wehler, "Absoluter" und "totaler" Krieg'.

'totalization of warfare' the first signs of which can already be detected in the American Civil War and the Franco-German war of 1870/1. The trend to total war has since 1861 been marked by the following features:<sup>11</sup> the aim of total war allows the war to continue until final victory, the enemy's unconditional capitulation, and the destruction of his power; the methods of 'total war' entail using all possible means of force against the enemy, ignoring the norms of international law and moral principles; total mobilization aims at making the utmost use of a society's human and material resources for the purposes of the war; and the 'war machine' (a term that includes technical and industrial factors as well as the centralized administrative structures of the state in wartime) runs at full capacity.<sup>12</sup> This invites two comments. First, it would be wrong to think that here society is being dealt with—by the state—from outside itself; this would run counter to the notion of 'self-mobilization'.<sup>13</sup> For another, seeing this profile should not prompt the false belief that there was an inevitability about the development. To counter any teleological interpretation one must keep in mind the fundamental openness of the historical process, including the writing of military history.<sup>14</sup>

Yet the idea of 'total war' goes well beyond mobilization in this sense. The extra dimension comes about from the link between 'total war' and a totalitarian form of society. In a totalitarian state (the term 'totalitarian' had been taken up by Benito Mussolini—the Nazi rulers used it less often) all social factors were to be a concern of the state, watched over by it and controlled by it. Behind this stood the idea of the 'total state', as this was conceived in the inter-war years.<sup>15</sup> Total control was thus intended to make private and public life too very largely geared to the waging of the war. On this point, of course, total mobilization and totalitarianism do stand in contrast to each other.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Förster, 'Zeitalter des totalen Krieges'. A series of interdisciplinary conferences on the subject yielded the following works: *On the Road to Total War*; *Anticipating Total War* (see here esp. Chickering, 'Total War'); *Great War, Total War*; *The Shadows of Total War*. The final volume on the Second World War has still to appear. See also Beckett, 'Total War'; Thoß, 'Die Zeit der Weltkriege', 11–12; Longerich, 'Joseph Goebbels'. If one follows Ludendorff's further thinking, total war would at the same time be genocidal war, since the aim of the war is the total destruction of the enemy population. See also, on Britain and the USA, Heuser, *The Bomb*, 102–34.

<sup>12</sup> See Pick, *War Machine*.

<sup>13</sup> See Horne, 'Mobilizing for "Total War"'. See, as an example of this, the following statement which, on the basis of having this 'object' character, insinuates the status of victimhood: 'The terrorizing measures and practices of extermination of Nazi occupation policy in eastern Europe found their brutal continuation in the aimed-at total mobilization of the German population', introduction to chapter II: 'Deutschland im Krieg', in *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumente*, ii. 268.

<sup>14</sup> See Förster, 'Im Reich des Absurden'.

<sup>15</sup> See only Forsthooff, *Der totale Staat*.

<sup>16</sup> On 'totalitarianism' and 'fascism' as ways of interpreting National Socialism see the critical view, with relevant literature, in Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 20–46. In the 1940s analysts were still concentrating on the specific features of fascism and National Socialism; one need see only Neumann, *Behemoth*. On the totalitarianism model of the early post-war years, aimed at comparing National Socialism with Stalinism, see Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitäre Diktatur*, and Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, among similar works. After the end of the Soviet system, research into totalitarianism underwent a revision, though without embarking (as many had feared) on a relativizing of its crimes, not least the war crimes of the Third Reich. One need only



The essential difference between the nation states that in the Second World War did, basically, embark on total mobilization—the Third Reich and USSR on the one hand and Britain and the United States of America on the other—lies in this monopoly of public life and ideology. In a totalitarian system the hold that the total permeation of society has outlasts the actual war itself. In other words, the behemoth persists after the war has ended—provided the system itself persists; something that it is well to keep at the back of one's mind when looking at warfare overall. Taken as a model of development, 'total war' focuses attention, 'from below' as well,<sup>17</sup> on the dynamic that results from the merging of the home front with the battle front *in the course* of the war. The dynamic can already be seen in the recurring category of the 'duration' that was a feature of the debate on the future, 'total' war that went on through the inter-war years. Total war was thought of as a short war. The longer it lasted, the more there would grow on the domestic front the danger of the bow of totalization being bent too far, of dissatisfaction at home with a continuing bad economic and food situation getting out of control, and of it becoming impossible to prevent this affecting the morale of the troops. 'Victory will prevent grief, which has a depressing effect,' Ludendorff predicted. 'On the other hand defeats, coupled with news of casualties in dead and wounded, depress people.'<sup>18</sup>

The model of 'total war' draws the attention to the geographical, temporal, and most of all social expansion of war, in a word of its 'extensivity',<sup>19</sup> that allows the dividing line between battle front and home front, soldiers and civilians, and even between perpetrators and victims, to become blurred.

*Secondly*, a promising approach is that of a *diachronic comparison of war society*. Though a systematic comparison is neither intended nor possible here,<sup>20</sup> a better outlining of the particular and the general can be achieved by looking back at war society during the years 1914 to 1918. In the longer perspective, looking at both world wars in the first half of the 'short' twentieth century, there is sometimes talk of a second, modern Thirty Years War (Raymond Aron),<sup>21</sup> of the Thirty-Year World War,<sup>22</sup> or of the Great World War,<sup>23</sup> in order to stress how much the 'epoch of the world wars' was all of a piece. The period stretching from 1914 to 1945 is then quickly seen, notwithstanding gradual differences, as one continuous armed conflict interrupted only by a

see the anthology *Totalitarismus im 20. Jahrhundert; Stalinismus und Nazismus*; Möll, *Gesellschaft und totalitäre Ordnung*. For a concrete analysis of the social and cultural history of National Socialism (in the war), the concept is however less suitable because of its teleological tendency.

<sup>17</sup> See *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes*.

<sup>18</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, 163–6, quote on 165.

<sup>19</sup> Chickering, 'Militärsgeschichte', 307–9.

<sup>20</sup> See as a first attempt *Erster Weltkrieg – Zweiter Weltkrieg*.

<sup>21</sup> See Howard, 'A Thirty Years' War?'; Stern, 'Der Erste Weltkrieg: Eine Rückbesinnung', 146; Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iii. 1168, iv. 222; Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*; Diner, *Jahrhundert*.

<sup>22</sup> See Sofsky, 'Moderne und Barberei', 64.

<sup>23</sup> *Great World War 1914–1945*, i.



precarious armistice (though without it always being clear what heuristic links have held all the research results together).<sup>24</sup> In most Germans' eyes what are now called the inter-war years were anyway regarded as an extension of the First World War. Versailles was merely 'a door opening on a fresh path of woe', as the historian Hermann Oncken put it in 1929, 'along which the war continued for a long time in different forms'.<sup>25</sup>

For understanding the war society of 1939–45, one needs to examine the continuity in patterns of thought and behaviour—if only because this makes it possible to grasp what was qualitatively new in the Second World War. The realization that when looking at the Second World War the First must not be disregarded applies not only to the military dimension in the narrow sense, to the preparations for war and the conduct of it. It matters just as much for the history of the home front from 1939 to 1945. In this regard the years from 1914 to 1918, like the post-war years that followed, formed a horizon in people's experience. Even children, adolescents, and young adults not born until after 1918 lived and felt the war that began in 1939 as being the *Second* World War, against the backdrop of private and public memories of the previous one. 'World War'—this was an expression that up until the middle of December 1941, when Hitler declared war on the United States, meant the war of 1914–18. The earlier experiences and memories formed the store of knowledge that after 1939 influenced the way people thought and the way they acted, though without making them mentally trapped by their war memories as if they had no longer had any freedom of action. Put another way, the times of the 1930s and 1940s cannot stand on their own. What is basically true of each and every experience must, in the case of the particularly dramatic and emphatically transmitted experiences of war, be paid special attention. The years of the Second World War, like every era, have an experiential-history component.

In this diachronic comparison one difference is, of course, striking. In both wars it was, it is true, on the German side a matter of the classic war aim (though in 1914 this was compounded with imperialism) of conquering foreign territory and gaining hegemony over other states. Yet from 1939 the war of conquest served, most of all in eastern Europe, to carry out a policy of colonization and extermination. It was clear, to the dictator and the military, that this was from the outset going to be an ideological total war—and

<sup>24</sup> Stig Förster is critical of this in his introductory remarks in *Erster Weltkrieg – Zweiter Weltkrieg*, 33–42, here 34–5. Förster downplays the importance of high casualty figures and the global nature of the world wars by pointing to earlier wars, and sees the specific and novel features in the 'totalizing of the conduct of war'. Kühne and Ziemann, 'Militärgeschichte', esp. 35–46, see on the other hand a cogent heuristic key element in an (experiential) history of the 'socialization of violence'. See also Ziemann, 'Vergesellschaftung'. This does not mean the concept of a 'European civil war' from 1917 to 1945 (Ernst Nolte), which provided the interpretative framework for the unsavoury thesis of preventive war with which the Nazis sought to justify the attack on the Soviet Union.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Cornelissen, 'Schuld am Weltfrieden', 240.

one waged both abroad and at home. Even though both the Germans and world opinion came to realize this only gradually, it is impossible to draw a distinction between a first phase of blitzkrieg war and a second phase of total war, especially since there can be no question of a clearly devised blitzkrieg economy.<sup>26</sup> Where the field of view takes in the period from 1914 to 1918, the authors play their part in historicizing the Nazi regime with regard to its second, war-years phase as well, so that it does not stand out like a kind of erratic block in Germany's history.

While on the one hand the comparative study of the subject looks into the past, some of the authors on the other take in the contemporary future (albeit with an agreed-upon measure of brevity). For one thing, their interest in tracing the history of effects is directed at the question of the structuring of the memory of war, at the themes that in post-war discourse have described the part the Germans played between 1939 and 1945. And for another, current lines of research in fields such as the continuity of elites or coming to terms with the past in a juridical way, as well as more recent political and social developments such as reparation (in particular that made in the 1990s to those who had been forced labourers), direct attention onto the years that followed 1945.

Despite all the horrors of war that were suffered between 1914 and 1918, despite the use of machine-guns and poison gas, the comparison with the First World War highlights the ever wider deploying of the means and methods of violence, and experiencing of violence, that found its culmination in the 1940s. It is, *thirdly*, this connection that nourishes the enquiring interest driving the contributions in question. The Second World War saw the zenith of a development that had begun in the nineteenth century: the *spread of war's violence into the social sphere*. This obvious specific, the actively inflicted and passively suffered violence, however, remained for a long time hidden behind the tabulated presentation of casualty figures and seemed in some wondrous way externalized, as if it came from without.<sup>27</sup> Yet violence is inherent in war society. When behaving with violence and experiencing violence is seen as a mark of war—and as a key concept in its experiential history—then it is possible in this connection to talk of a 'socializing of violence'.<sup>28</sup> In war society, the state and society—at first, as in the nineteenth century in the tradition of Friedrich Hegel, seen as being in opposition—become merged. Where violence no longer came from the state alone, and large sectors of society were prepared to inflict it, war changed from being a state-run enterprise into one shared by

<sup>26</sup> See for instance Frei, 'Der totale Krieg' (an earlier version entitled 'Der totale Krieg und die Deutschen' appeared in *Der nationalsozialistische Krieg*, 283–99).

<sup>27</sup> See for earlier literature (including *Germany and the Second World War*, iv) the critical survey by Geyer, 'Krieg als Gesellschaftspolitik', esp. 557–8.

<sup>28</sup> The formulation used by Geyer, 'Der zur Organisation erhobene Burgfrieden', 27. See Weisbrod, 'Sozialgeschichte und Gewalterfahrung'; Schumann, *Gewalt als Leitbegriff*.

society as a whole. To be sure, it was the state that organized the war and the violence, but society gave both of them impetus. Without the participation of society, or at least large parts of it, the war could not have been carried on.<sup>29</sup>

Those involved in total war had widely differing, active and passive experiences of violence, including that of economic exploitation, deportation, and forced labour, of campaigns of racial 'resettlement' and extermination, of partisan wars, area bombing, evacuation, flight, and expulsion. The civilian population, too, came to know the destructive power of long-distance weapons, which spared those who were doing the killing direct sight of the dead and dying. (Though of course living bodies could also still be destroyed from close up, with a shot or through an excess of violence—one need only think of the house-to-house fighting in Stalingrad, or the lynchings as the war ended.) So in what follows, wherever it is sensible to do so, the difference between violence and society will be opened up, and better light thrown on the anthropological dimension. The task must be to look also at violence *within* war society, which involves not least historicizing how the difference was brought about—for example in propaganda at the time, or subsequently through war literature. The surge in violence between 1939 and 1945 is not to be explained as the result of technical advances alone, but is linked with the readiness to use violent means, with the interests bound up with this, and with the social order in which it was possible.<sup>30</sup>

These considerations underline once again what at the beginning of our introduction was set out as a guideline for this volume as well: the war—like the whole Nazi period—cannot be looked at without the crimes of Nazism, which in turn cannot be separated from the social forces and developments that made them possible. Research is nowadays focused on 'the heart of Nazi rule: extermination policy, the killing of an intended 11 million Jews and the remodelling of Europe on race lines following a war of planned barbarity to establish race dominance and the brutal subjugation—in some cases, eradication—of "inferior" peoples.'<sup>31</sup> The rigid boundaries that long separated the fields of research have become permeable. War and Holocaust are examined in relationship to each other.

## 2. STRUCTURE

In a ten-volume series that now stretches back over twenty five years, Volume IX had to be like a contortionist 'doing the splits' to preserve the continuity of the work and at the same time demonstrate the change in the way history is studied and written. The larger number of authors—most of whom can, as historians go, be described as 'younger' ones—compared to earlier volumes, and the concomitant shorter length of their contributions, are already signs

<sup>29</sup> See Geyer, 'Krieg als Gesellschaftspolitik', 558.

<sup>30</sup> See Ziemann, 'Vergesellschaftung'.

<sup>31</sup> The latest account by Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 269.

that the breadth of the subject matter and wide variety of the research fields needed to be taken into account through a change in structure. Where content was concerned, the discussion was regularly focused around the tension between the series' original requirement for an overall treatment of society (sometimes coupled in the MGFA by the reference to the 'basic research' carried out there, and the 'handbook' nature of the work) and the scepticism that had grown about the ability of highly aggregating structural analysis to furnish explanations, and between macrohistory and microhistory approaches which give greater weight to regional studies and analysis of individual cases. In the volume that was to be produced within a short timescale there was not to be any question of launching fresh research projects, but rather of bringing together, on the basis of research projects under way or already planned with a focus of their own, selected individual studies; and at the same time taking stock of research into the subject and thus formulating more far-reaching views. All the parts are meant to mesh with each other; what is presented is—it could surely hardly be otherwise—provisional in nature, and does not indulge in a credulous holism that from the totality of the war deduces the totality of its depiction as military history. In this series (or 'Weltkriegswerk') it was in any case from the very beginning never a matter of '[aspiring] to completeness in any particular field or to fill [as] many gaps in the state of research' as possible, but rather 'to bring order into a multiplicity of data'—a point already made in the introduction to the first volume in 1979. It was clear, too, that bringing this order about is possible only by deciding on certain perspectives from which the criteria for selection and structuring the work can be arrived at.<sup>32</sup>

A principle of division of the series is moreover inconsistent with a further central theme of this volume, that of artificially splitting society into conceptually distinct civilian and military segments, and then combining these in an overall survey. Here it was the way civilian and military life intermeshed that was the deciding factor, together with the 'war on two fronts' already mentioned, in which the genocidal conduct of the war in the east fed back into the war against the enemy within and culminated in the industrialized murder of Europe's Jews.

The range of themes covered basically arises from the considerations set out above. Yet a number of points of view that might well have featured in a volume on society at war are, for sound reasons, not dealt with. For one thing, some of the dimensions of German war society touched on above have already been looked at in the series and can, indeed must, be left out here to make room for other aspects. This is true especially of the economic side of things: the Nazi economy and defence industry before 1939 were discussed in Volume I, and the wartime economy, mobilization, and war administration form the subject of Volume V.<sup>33</sup> Aspects of the war economy do nonetheless make an appearance in the present volume, for instance in the chapters on the

<sup>32</sup> Manfred Messerschmidt, introduction to *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I and v/II.

running of businesses or on forced labour in the armaments industry. On the other hand the history of social phenomena shortly before and after the end of the war, such as demographic shifts through flight and expulsion, crimes by Germans against other Germans, or German soldiers as prisoners of war, need to feature in Volume X.

For another thing, the choice of topics for investigation reflects the varying states reached in research. In some areas the last few years have seen a great deal of progress, say, with research into forced labour or the Holocaust which are given appropriate weight in Volume IX. For example the waging of genocidal war, which becomes especially apparent where Holocaust research and military history meet, is a theme that receives more intensive treatment. The volume thus approaches this topic from various sides. Most of the contributions that follow can find connections with the available research results, through their own points of focus widen them, and by posing fresh questions take them further. The individual contributors describe the present state of special research, and the limits of their own views.

Other areas still await thorough treatment, such as the history of gender in the Second World War, a history of political semantics during the war,<sup>34</sup> the role of Protestantism and Catholicism, or—to take a military field—a history of the army medical services.<sup>35</sup> It would moreover be desirable, alongside the diachronic comparison (with the First World War) we are considering here, to make a synchronic comparison of the various war societies between 1939 and 1945. An explicit and systematic comparison of two or more societies in history has the recognized advantage of better explaining radical changes in them, building up historical types, and not least making it possible to see their diversity.<sup>36</sup> To this extent the synchronic approach would act as a corrective to recollection—for what has been suffered personally in an air raid, for example, is imprinted deeper in the collective memory than that of other victims of the war. An analytical comparison with non-totalitarian communities such as Britain or the United States of America would also help to throw light on the connection between total war and totalitarian regimes in areas such as the invoking of the social-harmony-promoting *Volksgemeinschaft*, or as suffering becoming a commonplace.

It would be desirable, too, to take up the theme of war as a transnational experience, and if possible to bring together phenomena like occupation, deportation, flight, expulsion, international law, or resistance as components

<sup>34</sup> How fruitful semantic analysis can be for a *limited* historical compilation is demonstrated for the First World War in the comparison by Reimann, *Der große Krieg der Sprachen*, 9–25. Worthy of attention are Klemperer, *Language of the Third Reich*, and Sternberger, Storz, and Süsskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen*.

<sup>35</sup> See the research report by Kühne, 'Der nationalsozialistische Vernichtungskrieg und die "ganz normalen" Deutschen'.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. 48–53; *Andere Helme—andere Menschen?*

in a shared European history.<sup>37</sup> At present, however, that comes up against not only the series' predetermined focus on national history,<sup>38</sup> but also the lack of any transnational concepts for the writing of a contemporary European history.<sup>39</sup>

Because of the multiplicity of questions posed and approaches taken in various areas of research, Volume IX draws on a very wide sources-base, which as a rule obviates the risk of taking a one-dimensional view 'from above' and a tendency to rely only on official documents.<sup>40</sup> Using the documents produced by the military and political leadership predisposes towards a particular view of the war. What was recorded in documents, what had passed through an administrative process, provided the material for a large proportion of the accounts that have been written to date. The present half-volumes, on the other hand, have also to be based on files and records that do not deal directly with the war (just as, conversely, a good part of what is concerned with the war finds no place in the records). This applies, for instance, to what are termed 'egodocuments' such as diaries, soldiers' letters from the front and to them from home, or private correspondence within the Reich. Contemporary observations by third parties give insights into how people experienced the course of the war, and what meaning they gave to the times they were living in; by these are meant the 'public mood reports' prepared by the SD and, from 1944, the Wehrmacht, and reports by the Allies or by exiles. To this are added documents from local authorities—monthly reports by town councils, occurrence reports by local chiefs of police, and the minutes of local government committees, to name but a few. The Party's official local press, booklets, and monographs designed to boost the fighting spirit, together with war-propaganda leaflets and posters, are used as sources illustrating official and semi-official modes of thought and argument. Decrees, directives, and memoranda, as well as training-course curricula and public speeches, provide a picture of the regime's normative guidelines. Other documents come from the post-war period: transcripts from interrogations during preliminary court proceedings, for example, or eyewitness accounts and memories of the kind found scattered through local civic histories, or

<sup>37</sup> See, on resistance, the conference at the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF), Potsdam, in the spring of 2004, and the joint conference by MGFA and the Gedenkstätte deutscher Widerstand in July of that year.

<sup>38</sup> Other states come into consideration in connection with occupation rule, and especially from the aspect of the conduct of the war Italy (*Germany and the Second World War*, iii, chapters by Schreiber) and the Soviet Union (*Germany and the Second World War*, iv, chapters by Hoffmann).

<sup>39</sup> See, on the Europeanizing of contemporary history, *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* (2004), 3.

<sup>40</sup> See the criticism offered by Bartov, 'Wem gehört die Geschichte?', 608. Bartov moreover complains of the 'conservative methodology' of earlier volumes, of the 'disregard shown for social and cultural history', and of the 'almost total absence of any discussion of the Holocaust'.

memoirs of all kinds. Early collections of source material such as the 'Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden' (documents on war damage in Germany) yield important information, and photographs, posters, and films are looked at for the facts they can provide. And finally, the source material for many of the contributions was provided in the first place using the methods of oral history, in interviews looking back over the experiences of, for instance, the survivors of concentration camps or forced labourers. The list of archives consulted is a correspondingly long one. It ranges from the Feldpostarchiv Berlin, through the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv and Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt),<sup>41</sup> to the Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle and numerous local and regional archives.

Volume IX has four parts, presented in two half-volumes. Each part has an introduction summarizing the results of the individual contributions in it, to serve as a link between the parts of the volume and allow the reader a rapid overall view.

In *Part I* ('Rule, Destroy, Survive') *Arnim Nolzen* starts by describing the role of the NSDAP and its relationship with 'society' as the war proceeded and how it served to integrate the majority society, but also the importance it had as the driving force behind the exclusion of minorities. The presence of one such minority that was physically excluded from society—the inmates of concentration camps—is examined by *Karola Fings*; she looks at the interrelationship between the German population and the camp system through the uses made of prisoners from the camps, who from 1942 on were made to clear the rubble of large cities destroyed by the bombing. In doing so, she focuses on what part German war society played in establishing and developing the camp system.

The interconnections between the conduct of the war and the Holocaust, and the decision-making processes that led to the mechanized mass murder of European Jewry, are described in detail in the chapters by *Tobias Jersak*. There is no doubt as to the central importance the 'Jewish question' had for the German conduct of the war. Hitler brought forward the 'final solution' he was aiming at (and which had originally been intended to follow a victorious peace), and saw extermination of the Jews as an essential condition for a military victory. The two went hand in hand. Here, as with Fings, the perceptions of the rest of the population are examined: what effect did the Holocaust have on war society inside and outside Germany? How did the Germans react to the deportation of the Jews? What did they think and feel?

*Ralf Blank* then describes the experience of violence by Germans on the home front during the strategic air war. By looking at this from the opposite

<sup>41</sup> The full title is: Deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der ehemaligen Wehrmacht (German Office for Information for Close Relatives of the Dead of the Previous Wehrmacht).



angle, his account complements that of the Allied waging of the air war presented by Horst Boog in Volumes VI, VII, and X. Basing himself on numerous statements by those affected, Blank shows what everyday life ‘under the bombs’ looked like, what social and mental consequences the destruction and deaths on a massive scale inside Germany had on those who survived (and thus most of all on women, children, and the elderly), and how they and the regime reacted.

Central to *Part II* (‘Uniformed Society?’) are the soldiers. The ambiguous question as to a ‘uniformed society’ posed in the title points to the military structure, while at the same time querying its unity and clarifying the all-embracing understanding of what society is. It is a matter of its fighting morale, its indoctrination and discipline, but also of the resistance it offers. Here, as in the analysis of the social profile of the army, it revolves not least around the many and diverse ways the military and civilian levels of society were fused. The placing of this part within the volume as a whole reflects this. The Wehrmacht, though it really would have needed no further legitimization in the totalitarian state, deliberately worked on influencing public opinion. Wehrmacht propaganda was designed to present the outside world too with a rounded picture of the army, navy, and air force. The reverse side of the militarization of society was the politicization of the military. Both were aimed at ideological unity of the nation and its armed forces. *Jürgen Förster*, taking a long view stretching back to the end of the First World War, examines this ‘psychological warfare’. The complementary role of the radicalized military jurisdiction has already been touched on.<sup>42</sup>

Military and civilian society were linked not only by the ideological bond, but also by the extensive personal ties. *Christoph Rass*, in an exemplary approach to the topic, analyses by studying a particular infantry division the origin, development, and disintegration of the German army’s social and institutional structures during the war. His analysis of social structure ranges between the macro level of a large aggregation of statistics and the micro level of depicting individual soldiers’ day-to-day experience of war. The view of the circulation of personnel reveals, for example, the manifold links between the front and the homeland as the soldier’s service career progressed. What significance did civilian socialization have for the behaviour of the troops? And how did men make the move from civilian into military society?

*Winfried Heinemann* then shows the limits to uniformization, in another, transferred sense of the word, by considering resistance among the military as a part of the national-conservative resistance—from the initial criticism of the amateur way the war was being conducted, through an examination of the

<sup>42</sup> The contribution by Manfred Messerschmidt originally planned for inclusion here will demonstrate this in detail. Because of its length, his study appears as a separate monograph.

criminal nature of the war on the domestic and foreign fronts, to the varying political leanings of the dissidents.

In Volume IX/II, *Part I* concentrates on the question of what meanings were given to the war and the way it was going. How did people, soldiers or civilians, interpret the chequered events of the conflict, the battle going on inside the Reich and at the front? On this, *Sven Oliver Müller* studies central patterns of interpretation and discussion that guided action: the ideas of nation and *Volk*. The chapter on German 'nationalism' (it must be kept in mind here that as an analytical category the word carries no value judgement) deals with national ideas dating from the nineteenth century, used by the civilian population and the troops to lend meaning to the war. For most Germans, 'Volk' and 'nation' were a highly attractive classifying model, since it could be filled with differing and indeed conflicting political and cultural values. The notion of a *Volksgemeinschaft* born of the war was meanwhile effective in two directions: through its egalitarian call it brought the majority together, while through its biological, racist assumptions it categorically excluded a minority of 'enemies'. Nationalist patterns of interpretation helped the individual to bring order into the war's chaos. It allowed a great many Germans the conviction that it was their duty to fight for their people and fatherland—probably the most widely held belief among the combatants in all the warring nations.

To gauge the place German nationalism had in this connection recourse is had, inter alia, to letters to and from the troops. For all the criticism there may be of using these as a source, private correspondence during the war does open up a 'worm's-eye view' of what the Germans were thinking. Though before the war began (just as had been the case before 1914) it was mostly men and women from the upper and educated middle classes who corresponded by letter, the traffic in letters in wartime quickly assumed massive proportions. Thanks to the forces' postal service, there came to be—in spite of the censors—a vast exchange of private information. This correspondence is taken by *Katrin A. Kilian* as the basis for her description of the changing feelings of the troops, shifting from enthusiasm for the war and certainty of victory to expectation of defeat and war-weariness from 1942/3 on. A further opportunity for retrospective research into opinions is offered by what was said to third parties during the interrogation of German prisoners of war. Here too one is dealing with statements by officers and other ranks, by filtering which—with the critical caution needed when using sources—it is possible to obtain patterns of what was believed at the time. What picture did German POWs in American custody draw of German war society? This is examined by *Rafael A. Zagovec*.

The attempts to give meaning to life and patterns of interpretation by ordinary people are matched by those of the Nazi regime to influence public opinion among its population through direct or indirect propaganda. Analysis of the content of this propaganda with regard to the war—which is what this section is about—brings out clearly Nazi thinking and the words and images in which it was couched. By doing this, the description and self-description of

the Nazi regime during the war (and of its protagonists after the war ended) are kept apart, and not undiscerningly rolled into one. Recent history of the Third Reich's media and propaganda looks at the content of the propaganda, at how the regime presented itself in daily wartime life, and at the interaction between propaganda and public opinion.

*Birthe Kundrus* deals with an indirect form of Nazi propaganda, 'cultural warfare' in the theatre and cinema and on radio, and investigates how far the distracting of people's thoughts constituted, at the same time, the directing of them. She looks at the role that high culture and culture for the masses played for the Nazis in their running of the war, in particular in selling the utopia of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to the public; but she shows, too, the limits there were on making use of culture as a propaganda tool. The direct form of exerting influence—propaganda in the narrower sense—is then considered in two shorter contributions that analyse its content and how this changed: *Jeffrey Herf* studies the anti-Semitic theme in Goebbels's propaganda, and *Aristotle A. Kallis* examines how the propaganda ministry worked to present what was happening in the war, especially in its second half when there were fewer and fewer victories to report.

In *Part II* of Volume IX/II it is less the Germans who are the main focus of attention than those who had fallen into German hands—civilian foreign forced labourers, prisoners, and prisoners of war, and the peoples of eastern Europe. Carl Schmitt had defined the enemy, tautologically, as 'the other, the stranger, and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien'.<sup>43</sup> Against a background of nationalism and Nazi propaganda the fact that most men were fighting far away from home while the enemy was more and more frequently living among them—mainly female—*Volksgenossen* exacerbated the feeling of being under threat and the urge to aggression, which could find expression in the treatment of foreigners inside the Reich and, especially in the territories of eastern Europe, could combine with earlier experience of violence. Where this foreigner could furthermore be declared someone who had always been a racially inferior 'subhuman', the barriers holding back the use of violence could be swept aside. The employment in the Reich of foreign workers and Soviet POWs drove on the ever more brutal spiral of violence in the war years. War and forced labour interacted upon each other.

By the end of 1944 this minority within war society inside Germany numbered around 8 million foreigners. *Mark Spoerer* begins with a systematic overview of the organization of forced labour, highlighting the crucially important gradations based on legal status. Whether a person was a civilian foreign worker, a prisoner of war, or a (German) prisoner in a concentration camp was the principal factor that decided the individual's living and working conditions, followed by his ethnic background. Spoerer shows how foreign

<sup>43</sup> Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 27.

civilian workers were recruited in the conquered territories, what legal provisions underlay the 'employment of foreigners', and how the various groups of foreigners—in a hierarchy based on racist criteria—were treated in their daily lives.

Here the results segue into the next two contributions, which also look as if through a magnifying glass at the male and female forced labourers in agriculture and in industry. *Ela Hornung*, *Ernst Langthaler*, and *Sabine Schweitzer* show how the progress of the war affected living and working conditions for the foreign workforce in the countryside within the 'working community', how the locals reacted to them, and what consequences the relatively wide freedom of action allowed to their 'employers' had for these foreign men and women. *Oliver Rathkolb* deals with various aspects of industrial forced labour. What role did the firm and its managers play in the recruitment, and the actual 'employment'? What was the world of work like for the men and women doing forced labour at various levels of the racial hierarchy? And finally, how did the situation of those in industry differ from that of forced labourers on the land?

Companies from virtually all sectors of the manufacturing and service industries were involved in the Nazis' criminal policy. IG Farben, Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz—the interest of all these concerns, not least their interest in profiting from armament and a war, overlapped with that of the Nazi regime, without it being possible to equate with the other. *Georg Wagner-Kyora* investigates how the image of themselves and of the enemy held by German armaments industrialists and their top managers changed through their allowing National Socialist ideas to permeate their labour and social policy—something that affected the foreign civilian workers and concentration-camp prisoners more than the core German workforce. From 1942 onwards employing foreigners in Germany became essential for continuing the war effort, since it made up for the manpower shortage; conversely, it was the war of conquest that first made the deportations, mainly from eastern Europe, possible. Deportation, exploitation, and extermination all form part of the manifold forms of behaviour that mark the complex relationship between occupied and occupier as much as does the almost normal everyday coexistence on the ground. *Bernhard Chiari* consequently directs attention, from the perspective of eastern Europe research, at those in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in White Russia, the Ukraine, and the occupied areas of 'Greater Russia'. Presenting the history of the mentality underlying German occupation rule, in particular demonstrating the existence of a historically determined disposition to violence fuelled by nation-forming and nationalism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism, serves as a backcloth to the history of the east European forced labourer, and furthermore provides a complementary contribution to

the chapter on the Holocaust and a meaningful supplement to what has been said in previous volumes on the history of the occupation as regards exploitation, administration, and racial policy.<sup>44</sup>

From eastern Europe came, last but not least, a group of ‘foreigners’ who fell victim to the war of extermination—the Soviet prisoners of war. In a comparative survey of the fate of all the major groups of prisoners of war, *Rüdiger Overmans* examines especially the political decisions taken by the warring nations on where they stood in relation to international law—for the position of POWs was, unlike that of, say, foreign civilian workers, governed by its provisions. Whereas the differing treatment meted out to the various groups has previously been explained mostly by the factors of manpower shortage and racism, the Nazi leadership’s decisions were here influenced by experiences during the First World War.

Finally, *Hans-Ulrich Thamer* again sums up the main results of the two-part volume. Taking a wide-angle view, his closing remarks examine German society at war between 1939 and 1945; the portrayal of this could only profit from a comparison of the various wartime societies in Europe, North America, and Asia. Such a comparing of societies—not to be confused with putting them on a par—has still to be undertaken.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, iv (Müller) and v/I (Umbreit).

<sup>45</sup> The purpose, in 2006, of an international conference organized by the German Historical Institute, Paris, and the MGFA, in collaboration with the German Historical Institutes in London, Moscow, Rome, and Warsaw and the Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent, Paris. See Echternkamp and Martens, *Erfahrung und Erinnerung*.

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## **PART I**

### **Rule, Destroy, Survive**



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## Introduction to Part I

BETWEEN 1939 and 1945 the Germans were, as the Nazi regime conceived it, to be welded into a national community at arms, and to carry on a war against the enemy without and within, against the minorities stigmatized as 'enemies' of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Moreover, the home and external fronts did indeed, as the war went on and as a result of the air war, become one. These characteristics of the war society have already been discussed in the introduction; looked at from various angles, they are also the subject of Part I. To start with, *Armin Nolzen* examines the relationship between the NSDAP and German society during the war. Differing from the assumption made so far that the Party and society had been in opposition to each other, he sees in the multi-branched Party apparatus, in which at the outbreak of war more than half the inhabitants of the Greater German Reich had been organized, a social-structure image of Nazi war society. The NSDAP's activities consisted, first of all, of measures for imposing social discipline, which in broad sectors of society was equivalent to social control of their own members. Beyond this, the Party harnessed the population to the policy of the Nazi regime by various 'people management' measures such as the supplying of emergency aid after air raids. This 'national community' bonding remained intact right up to the end of the war thanks not least to the Party, for one thing because through its offices it opened up opportunities for political participation and social advancement. As the war went on there was, furthermore, an ever closer sharing of work between the NSDAP, Wehrmacht, and industry.

Up to the attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, it was the Party that drove the inner regimenting of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. First, the Party leadership made sure that it had enough personnel of its own to maintain the work of the Party at its previous level. Full-time political leaders were classed as in a reserved occupation, and male staff who were called up were replaced with women. The Reich youth leadership and Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend*, HJ) intensified the social control kept over the young until such time as they were conscripted into the Wehrmacht. To achieve more influence over the Wehrmacht, and edge the two churches out of caring for the souls of the Wehrmacht, the NSDAP tried in the first two years of the war to extend further its 'care of the troops' and soldiers' welfare. In this it could count on the support of the OKW (the Wehrmacht supreme command), which recognized the Party as the sole body that should have care of the ties between front and homeland. From there it was but a step to the Party gaining a far greater ideological influence over the troops, a process that found its (temporary) high point with the introduction in late 1943 of the National Socialist political education officer (*Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier*, NSFO).

In the period from the attack on the Soviet Union to the 'Italian crisis' in summer 1943 the Party's people management on the home front underwent a change. More and more its whole apparatus was busy coping with tasks connected with the war, and with short-term crisis management. One problem that arose was that after 22 June 1941 the NSDAP had only half its peacetime staff complement, among both its full-time and honorary workforce. As a result the Party chancellery tried to increase Party members' readiness to serve, by acting on their emotional socialization via Party leisure time activities and 'closed members' meetings'—the *Sprechabend*—where another aim pursued was the ideological 'guidance' of Party members and political leaders.

The Party acted, as with the 'Jewish policy' of the years from 1933 to 1941/2, as the guardian of 'racial purity', and advocated a total separation between the German population and the foreign workforce. In cooperation with the police system, the ministerial bureaucracy, the Wehrmacht, and business and industry, an administrative means was worked out for establishing a racial hierarchy among the foreign workers. German women who offended against the commandment on racial purity were punished by local Party authorities. There was in the end a singular deviation from the intensifying of racism in the employment of foreigners inside the Reich, in the aid provided by the Party after Allied air raids; under the pressure of the bombing war the NSV (the National Socialist people's welfare organization) went over to caring for all air-raid victims without discriminating between them.

In the latter part of the war, from summer 1943 to the capitulation on 8/9 May 1945, the Party became the force leading the German population into total war. The proven strategies used for mobilizing people inside the Party in the movement's early 'days of struggle' before 1933 were now reactivated. Parades, paramilitary marches, and constantly reiterated calls to hold out were designed to persuade those in the Party that come what may their efforts would be crowned with 'final victory'. At the same time the Party increasingly brought the older generation, youth, and women together in the Reich's civilian defence, and saw to it that the military agencies could call on enough manpower for their 'fighting tasks'.

That the cohesion of the *Volksgemeinschaft*—and in the end of the Party apparatus as well—depended more and more on repression is clear. Here it has to be emphasized, however, that the terror-by-exclusion practised by the Party always remained marginal. All that changed in the Second World War was that the weight was shifted. Inwardly and outwardly the Party apparatus was indeed generally repressive, but this was based more and more on mechanisms for inclusion. There are however only a few examples of the Party, in cases where the rules had been broken, resorting to draconian punishment of Party members.

The terror was used mostly against the 'Others'. In hardly any social area did ruling and destroying so closely coincide, during the Nazi period, as in the concentration camps. By the end of the war there were twenty-two main

camps and some 1,200 satellite camps spread round Germany and occupied Europe. Set up to isolate the domestic political opposition and then the racial enemy, their importance increased considerably with the start of the war: they were to ensure 'quiet' on the home front, they provided an interface with the extermination camps, and they served as a final reservoir of manpower for an armaments industry geared from 1942 to a war of attrition. *Karola Fings*, in her study taking satellite camps sited in major German cities as an example, examines how these fitted into German war society. The use of prisoner labour, together with foreign civilian forced labourers and prisoners of war imported in ever increasing numbers ever since the start of the war into areas suffering an acute labour shortage, had become commonplace. Under the pressure of the air raids the use of concentration-camp inmates to clear the rubble was discussed in 1942, and the subsequent largely smooth and trouble-free establishment of camps shows that the expansion of the camp system was the product of a dynamic process in which a great many bodies at local, regional, and nationwide level took an active part. It can be seen, from a close study of practice in local communities and the reaction to the squads of prisoners of the German society in whose midst they worked, that the concentration camps' potential for the use of violence could blossom even in relatively open public view in the towns. The society of the camps, suffering malnourishment, terror used at work, and violence, came face to face with a surrounding society of which racism, repression in daily life, and belonging to the *Volksgemeinschaft* were inherent features. In only a few, isolated cases was there any political support for the prisoners—other than in places like occupied France and Belgium. Thus the far-reaching condoning of the camps, and their embedding in the society of the city, finally ended in the terror no longer being confined within the camp's barbed-wire fence, but spreading more and more into an increasingly harshening war society. From the prisoners' viewpoint, the German society around them was part of that fence.

Not until liberation by the Allies was the mass murder in German concentration camps brought to an end. *Tobias Jersak* therefore poses the question of how German war society was capable of killing the European Jews. The conditions needed for this are traced by him in two major sections: a depiction of the interrelations between war and Holocaust forms one of these, and the relationship of German war society to the Holocaust the other.

If Hitler had not started a war, there would have been no Holocaust either: it was the war that brought about the change in the Nazi policy towards the Jews. The 'final solution' planned for after the war was not begun, as it were self-radicalizing, as a by-product of a war plan that had strayed off course; rather the campaign against the Soviet Union turned into a war against the Jews, one that grew into the Holocaust at the moment when the premisses Hitler himself had set seemed to have miscarried, his prediction to have come true, and his rule to be in jeopardy. The Holocaust began in the war, and came to an end before the war did. In Hitler's eyes, race war and war for territory

had changed roles. The new strategy replacing 'the final solution through final victory' was now 'final victory through the final solution', and it gave rise to Auschwitz and the mass gassings of Operation REINHARD.

Where German war society is concerned, one of its most significant features is that it reconstituted itself outside Germany. This process did not however happen in the same way as inside the Reich, but rather as a copy of the racial 'ideal society' of the Nazi and thus Hitler's ideology, in which a male-dominated master race selected and made use of the peoples under its sway, applying racist criteria. On the subject of the murder of Europe's Jews, the author discusses normality during the war, and notes a shifting in standards as being normality.

The most striking thing about the Nazi extermination of the Jews was that while it began in public its most terrible dimension was played out in secret. Only when kept a secret could knowledge of the slaughter stabilize the Nazi system right to the end, for in a growing knowledge of the truth the lie had spread in society. For German war society outside Germany's borders the Holocaust became an open secret; one that, the more of an open secret it became, the less people wanted to get to know the details of.

Alongside the forging of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* and the persecution, indeed extermination of its 'enemies'—these two sides of the 'war on two fronts'—came the civilian population's direct and ongoing confrontation with the events of war through the Allied bombing raids, which put the utopia of the *Volksgemeinschaft* to the test and affected the majority and minority, the *Volksgenossen* and people like the 'eastern workers', without distinction. These raids caused enormous damage to property, visible for decades afterwards. More than 400,000 persons died in the air raids within what were then the Reich borders. Close on sixty years after the end of the war these facts, and how this fundamental aspect of German war experience is seen, are still the subject of heated debate, especially since an overall account—which would have to be based on painstaking local and regional studies—has still to be written. Accordingly *Ralf Blank* in his contribution addresses the main aspects from the perspective of how the war was experienced by the population.

In their objectives the Allied plans for waging an air war differed only marginally from those of the German Luftwaffe, which had already tried in autumn 1940 to weaken the morale of the British civilian population by bombing them, and from 1944 was the first to use long-range rockets and flying bombs as a depersonalized weapon of terror. With the stepping-up of the Allied bombing from the spring of 1942 the propaganda image of the *Volksgemeinschaft* bravely defying the bombs had less and less to do with the day-to-day experience in war society. In the industrial regions the air offensive that began in spring 1943 had by spring 1945 destroyed the bases of social, political, and economic life. It was only with great effort and by exploiting the occupied countries that the Nazi regime could guarantee the supply of replacement goods and food to its population. Yet by the autumn of 1944 at

the latest even these makeshift provisions were breaking down. Government and Party strove, with large-scale projects, to cope with the severe repercussions of the bombing. Besides major programmes for building air-raid bunkers, these projects included in particular an expansion of the evacuation of children from the towns, the building of emergency accommodation for the bombed-out, and from autumn 1944 the measures for 'total mobilization of resources for war'. Added to these was the calling-up of youths and young women who were straightaway integrated into the military defence structure as flak auxiliaries. In the final phase of the war, in 1944/5, the bombing had become an all-pervading problem. Continuous daylight and night raids by the strategic air fleets and constant low-level attacks by fighter-bombers and medium-range bombers, together with a collapsing defence on the east, south, and west of the Reich, now left the home front with little room for slogans promising final victory. During the closing six months of the war more German cities, and now smaller and medium-sized towns as well, were reduced to rubble and ashes than had ever been in previous years. The overwhelming presence of Allied aircraft stood as a potent symbol of the downfall of the Third Reich.

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## B. The NSDAP, the War, and German Society

ARMIN NOLZEN

### I. The NSDAP's Structure and Functions before the War

THE work *Behemoth* by the jurist and political scientist Franz Leopold Neumann, which appeared first in 1942 and in expanded form in 1944, still today provides one of the most fascinating interpretations of the Third Reich. Neumann, born in 1900, had studied with Hugo Sinzheimer in Frankfurt am Main, and in 1928 moved to Berlin where he opened a law practice and taught at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik.<sup>1</sup> As an unremitting critic of National Socialism, and close to the left wing of the SPD and the trade unions, he was imprisoned soon after Hitler's seizure of power on 30 January 1933. Only a few weeks later he managed to flee to Britain, where he took up a course in the political sciences at the London School of Economics. In 1936 Neumann settled in the United States of America and entered Max Horkheimer's Frankfurter Institut für Sozialforschung (better known as the 'Frankfurt School') which had moved to New York. In 1940 he began writing the first part of *Behemoth*, which he completed at the end of 1941. From 1942 he worked with Herbert Marcuse for the American Office of Strategic Services—a coordinating authority for the US secret services—and after the end of the war prepared expert opinions for American policy on Germany.<sup>2</sup> It was in this connection that the second part of *Behemoth*, described as an 'appendix', was written in 1944.

In *Behemoth* Neumann saw the Nazi regime as a 'un-state' moving towards the 'rule of lawlessness', in which the state and the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) fought over its demand for total control.<sup>3</sup> In the Second World War, he said, the conflict between 'totalitarian state' (Leviathan) and 'totalitarian movement' (Behemoth) gave rise to a new form of society, one in which the ruling groups directly controlled the German population

<sup>1</sup> On Neumann's life see Söllner, 'Franz L. Neumann', 7–56.

<sup>2</sup> Marquardt-Bigman, *Amerikanische Geheimdienstanalysen*, 67–80.

<sup>3</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth*, p. xii (quotation), 47–9, 62–5.

through propaganda and sheer violence.<sup>4</sup> The Nazi regime had more and more suspended the law, and crushed all intermediary bodies in German society.

Which were these 'ruling groups' in the Nazi state that Neumann talked about in *Behemoth*? Central to his theory of the Third Reich as a 'un-state' was the acceptance that the unitary authority of the state had since 1933 successively disintegrated, and that with the civil-service bureaucracy, the Nazi Party, the Wehrmacht, and big industry there had come into being four new power centres that wielded 'direct' rule over the population. Neumann proceeded from the idea that these four wielders of power were each sovereign unto themselves, and that the shaping of political will in the Third Reich rested on unregulated negotiations between their main protagonists. Thus, the leading representatives of the civil service, Party, Wehrmacht, and economy were constantly negotiating anew among themselves the political measures needed in each individual case.<sup>5</sup> For Neumann the most dynamic element in this 'totalitarian pluralism' was the Nazi Party.<sup>6</sup> It had emancipated itself more and more from the government administration, and tried either to infiltrate its cadres into the civil service and public offices, or to pervade these with Nazi ideology.<sup>7</sup> In his 1944 'Appendix' Neumann noted that the Party alone 'maintains German society. Without the Party Germany would collapse. Party, state, and society are, under wartime conditions, identical. The Party provides the ideological leadership; it supplies the huge system of terror; it runs the occupied territories; it provides bread, shelter, clothing, and medical services for air-raid victims; it controls the administration; it administers labour and housing supply; it supervises millions of foreign laborers. In short, controls all but two fields: the fighting fronts, and the economy.'<sup>8</sup>

Neumann's assessment that in the Second World War the Nazi Party almost totally ruled German society has by now found acceptance in many historical studies of how the Third Reich developed. National Socialism research has indeed enshrined this judgement, which makes it all the more surprising that most authors who accept this assessment do not even begin to analyse the Party's activities after 1939/40. Turning to the chapter on the Second World War in the overall accounts of the Nazi state, one will search there in vain for mention of the Party.<sup>9</sup> In most regional and local studies the role of the Party

<sup>4</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth*, 436–58, 470, and Bast, *Totalitärer Pluralismus*, 274–87.

<sup>5</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth* (1984), 467–76, and Bast, *Totalitärer Pluralismus*, 1–7, 287–303. This model is used in Hüttenberger, 'Nationalsozialistische Polykratie', 423–33. On this see the comments by Moll in 'Führer-Erlasse', 9–60, esp. 25–6.

<sup>6</sup> Neumann himself did not use this concept. It is however, as Bast, *Totalitärer Pluralismus*, 28–122, shows, an appropriate translation of Neumann's allegory of the 'Behemoth', that monster from Jewish eschatology that imposed a reign of terror over land and desert.

<sup>7</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth* (1984), 62–75, 369–73, 378–82.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 530–40, here 530 (quotation).

<sup>9</sup> For example in Broszat, *Hitler State*, 294–327; Bracher, *German Dictatorship*, 400–60; Frei, *National Socialist Rule*, 109–48; Thamer, *Verführung und Gewalt*, 625–777; Wendt, *Deutschland 1933–1945*, 469–689; Dülffer, *Nazi Germany 1933–1945*, 117–205; Herbst, *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland*, 275–453; Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, 407–793, and Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, iv. 842–937.

during the war is given only a few pages, amounting to a summary listing of its activities.<sup>10</sup> It is however simply impossible to write a history of German society in the Second World War without allocating the Nazi Party a pre-eminent place.<sup>11</sup> It was an organization that from 1938/9 exerted increasing influence on all areas of policy in the Nazi state, and played a decisive part in the 'cumulative radicalization' of it during the Second World War.<sup>12</sup>

A major problem that arises in any scientific study of the Nazi state is to know exactly which institutions and organizations are to be understood as 'the NSDAP'. The Party developed after Hitler's seizure of power on 30 January 1933 as an entirely amorphous formation.<sup>13</sup> This resulted first of all in an immense growth in membership of the Party. Numberless Germans applied to join, for a great many advantages flowed from belonging to it. From a tally of 850,000 in early January 1933 the Party's numbers trebled within the first half of that year to just on 2,700,000, which doubled again to 5,300,000 by the start of the war, to finally reach a high point at close on 9 million members in early 1945.<sup>14</sup> This brought about a fundamental change in the Party's function. From a social movement that up to the seizure of power was primarily concerned with canvassing for votes it turned into a mass organization that had great trouble in integrating its own members.

After the Reichstag elections on 5 March 1933 the Party initiated an unprecedented wave of terror on the streets, during which many of those who held office under the Weimar Republic were hounded from their jobs, and organizations and institutions were either destroyed or neutered.<sup>15</sup> In this terrorist drive for the *Gleichschaltung*—coordination, or consolidation—of German society Party activists usurped, in the Reich, the regions, and local communities, every conceivable office; they stripped existing interest groups of power, and transferred their members into National Socialist organizations. The eradication of intermediary societies and associations hastened the process of disintegration within the Party. The Party apparatus now broke up into four

<sup>10</sup> For instance Sauer, *Württemberg*, 332–498, here 381–90; Müller, *Stuttgart zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, 323–538, here 429–41, 449–56; Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen*, 679–734, here 686–93; Fasse, *Katholiken und NS-Herrschaft*, 531–668, here 572–87; Halter, *Stadt unterm Hakenkreuz*, 495–550, here 509–11, 526–8, and Klemp, 'Richtige Nazis', 458–579, here 459–63.

<sup>11</sup> It was above all Hans Mommsen who repeatedly drew attention to this: Mommsen, *Beamten-tum im 3. Reich*, 20–39, 62–90; id., 'Ausnahmestand'; id., 'Hitlers Stellung'; id., 'Die NSDAP als faschistische Partei'; id., 'Rückkehr zu den Ursprüngen'; id., *Auschwitz*, 17. Juli 1942, 28–40.

<sup>12</sup> The term was introduced into National Socialism research by Mommsen, 'Der Nationalsozialismus: Kumulative Radikalisierung'. An excellent interpretation is given by Kershaw, 'Cumulative Radicalisation'.

<sup>13</sup> See Orlow, *History of the Nazi Party*, ii. 3–17, and Grill, 'The Nazi Movement in Baden', 519–36. Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 317–60, on the other hand, treat the NSDAP as a monolithic organization.

<sup>14</sup> On the growth of membership in the Party see Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 263, fig. 1. On social change in the NSDAP after the seizure of power Kater, 'Sozialer Wandel', 36–8, 41, 43, and Falter, 'Märzgefallenen'.

<sup>15</sup> Broszat, *Hitler State*, 77–84, strikingly termed this 'Party revolution from below'; see Nolzen, 'Martin Broszat'. An indispensable source on the role of the NSDAP after 5 Mar. 1933 is the best regional study so far, Grill, 'Nazi Movement in Baden', 243–94.

separate parts: first, the political organization—the core Party, embracing the Party members or *Parteigenossen* ('Pg', lit. Party comrades); secondly, the divisions; thirdly, the affiliated organizations, whose members did not have automatically to be in the Party.<sup>16</sup> These were joined from 1937/8 by, fourthly, the supervised organizations, whose legal relationship to the NSDAP however remained rather unclear.<sup>17</sup> How large these individual Nazi organizations were can be seen from the figures in Table I.A.I.I. When the war began the Hitler Youth (HJ) and League of German Girls (BDM) with 9 million boys and girls, and the National Socialist Women's Groups (NSF) with more than 1.4 million women, were the divisions with the largest number of members. At the same date the German Labour Front (DAF) with a compulsory membership of 22 million, and the National Socialist Public Welfare Organization (NSV) numbering more than 14 million members, were the two biggest affiliated organizations. The German Women's Work (DFW), which came under the NSF, was the largest of the supervised organizations.

If all the members of the NSDAP and its divisions, affiliated, and supervised organizations are taken together, then on 1 September 1939 just on 69 million Germans were incorporated into one of those that belonged to the Nazi Party. This figure relates to the 'Greater German Reich', which besides Germany took in the Saarland, Austria, the Sudetenland, and the Memel region.<sup>18</sup> It says little, however, about what percentage of the German population was actually organized within the NSDAP, since the various organizations had innumerable dual and multi-memberships. The discrepancy between the sexes in the individual bodies was sometimes very marked; on average, at most 10 per cent of women belonged to the Party.<sup>19</sup> Where the divisions are concerned, the BDM as the girls' part of the Hitler Youth and the NSF had only female members. The stormtroopers (SA) and SS consisted almost entirely of men. Except for the NSV and the teachers' organization (the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund*, NSLB) the affiliated organizations had a predominantly male membership. Overall, at the beginning of the war 12 million women were in one of the many Nazi organizations,<sup>20</sup> equivalent to nearly 30 per cent of the total female population.

<sup>16</sup> On the terms *Gliederungen* (divisions) and *angeschlossene Verbände* (affiliated organizations) of the Party see the ordinance on implementation of the Law to Assure the Unity of Party and State, of 29 Mar. 1935, *RGBl. I*, 1935, 502–3, in the version of 5 Dec. 1935, *ibid.*, 1935. Also contemporary statements in *Das Recht der NSDAP*, 56–100.

<sup>17</sup> Subsumed under 'supervised organizations' from 1937/8 were those National Socialist organizations that were intended to carry on 'ideological education work' without their having been 'declared a division of the NSDAP or an affiliated organization'; see Redelsberger, 'Von der NSDAP betreute Organisation', 132 (quotation). In practice it was not always clear which organizations were covered by this woolly formulation. The *Reichsnährstand* (RNSt, Reich Food Estate) and the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD, Reich Labour Service), at all events, were not among the supervised organizations but were in fact independent of the Party; see Corni and Gies, *Brot*, 212–48, and Patel, 'Der Arbeitsdienst für Männer', 63–7.

<sup>18</sup> In 1939 its inhabitants totalled 76,502,900 persons; see *Parteistatistik der NSDAP*, iv. 4.

<sup>19</sup> This may be seen from Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 150–2.

<sup>20</sup> Figure from Frevert, 'Frauen', 233.

It has to be borne in mind that certain social groups were excluded from membership of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations, or were subsequently expelled from them. These included 'gypsies' or 'part-gypsies', freemasons, and also those who were in the political opposition. And naturally the close on 350,000 Jews living in Germany at this time could not belong to the NSDAP;<sup>21</sup> the same applied to the nearly 115,000 'first and second degree part-Jews' as defined in the two 'Nuremberg Laws' of 15 September 1935.<sup>22</sup> There were however varying membership rules in respect of these groups in the different organizations.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in the Party and its organizations the 'Aryan clause' applied, and indeed in its more stringent form. Only the DAF, NSV, and the National Socialist War Victims Support Organization (NSKOV) were exempted. One of the Party's most important tasks was to remove Jews from all the 'coordinated' associations and groupings, and make all shared Jewish-German associative life impossible. It was thus a tool of the Nazi racist state in excluding Jews from German society.<sup>24</sup>

The other face of this policy involved the inclusion of the widest possible segments of the 'Aryan' population in the multi-branched Party apparatus. From a society that in the days of the Weimar Republic had still been pluralistic, the NSDAP and its various bodies had since 1933/4 built up a mass following in the Third Reich. The same was true in Austria, the Sudetenland, and the Memel region, to which the Party had been exported immediately after the annexation in 1938/9.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the Jews, there was no social class and no religion missing from the NSDAP. In the *Altreich* it had managed already before 1933 to attract in members from all milieux, even from among the workers and the Catholics.<sup>26</sup> After the seizure of power this trend continued,

<sup>21</sup> Berschel, *Bürokratie und Terror*, 31, table 3.

<sup>22</sup> Reich Statistics Office, 'Die Juden und die jüdischen Mischlinge in den Reichsteilen nach dem Geschlecht auf Grund der Volkszählung vom 17. Mai 1939', BA, Schumacher collection, 240 I. On the 'Nuremberg Laws' and the debate on the term 'Jew', see Essner, 'Die Nürnberger Gesetze', 134–73.

<sup>23</sup> Early in 1937 it was laid down that 'first- or second-degree part-Jews'—that is to say persons with two or one Jewish grandparents—could belong to neither the NSDAP and its divisions nor to the RDB, NSLB, or NSRB. From then on, part-Jews were excluded from these organizations; see BA NS 10.492, together with YVA, O.2/1126, 1137. It was left to the NSDAB and NSBDT themselves to decide how far they accepted 'part-Jews'. The latter could also belong to the DAF, NSV, and NSKOV; see BA R 43 II/422 and Meyer, 'Jüdische Mischlinge', 252–9, here 252–3.

<sup>24</sup> On the character of the Third Reich as a racist state see Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 23–73.

<sup>25</sup> On the growth of the NSDAP in these areas see Jagschitz, 'Von der "Bewegung" zum Apparat'; Zimmermann, *Die Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat*, 119–31, and Broszat, 'Die memeldeutschen Organisationen', 399–40.

<sup>26</sup> On Party membership before 1933 see Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 19–71; Manstein, *Mitglieder und Wähler der NSDAP*, 102–64, and essentially Mühlberger, *Hitler's Followers*, here 202–9. In Austria matters were much the same, though there the workers remained more resistant; see Botz, 'Changing Patterns', 215–16. In the Sudetenland the NSDAP's precursor, Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei, had a total of 1,349,180 adherents in mid-1938. This meant that of 3,070,938 Sudeten Germans just on 44 per cent were organized; Zimmermann, *Die Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat*, 58.

TABLE I.B.I.I. *Members of the NSDAP and its organizations—as at 1 September 1939*

National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, <i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> )	5,310,000
DIVISIONS	
Storm Troopers (SA, <i>Sturmabteilung</i> )	1,329,448
<i>Schutzstaffel</i> (SS)	235,526
National Socialist Motor Corps (NSKK, <i>Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps</i> )	350,000
Hitler Youth (HJ, <i>Hitler-Jugend</i> ) and League of German Girls (BDM, <i>Bund Deutscher Mädel</i> )	8,700,000
National Socialist Women's Groups (NSF, <i>Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft</i> )	1,400,000
National Socialist German Students' League (NSDStB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund</i> )	27,700
National Socialist University Teachers' League (NSDozB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Dozentenbund</i> )	15,000
AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS	
German Labour Front (DAF, <i>Deutsche Arbeitsfront</i> )	22,127,793
National Socialist Doctors' Alliance (NSDÄB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Ärztebund</i> )	30,000
National Socialist League of Legal officials (NSRB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Rechtswahrerbund</i> )	104,171
National Socialist Teachers' Alliance (NSLB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund</i> )	300,000
National Socialist People's Welfare Organization (NSV, <i>Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt</i> )	14,187,834
National Socialist War Victims' Welfare (NSKOV, <i>Nationalsozialistische Kriegsofopferversorgung</i> )	1,600,000
Reich League of German Civil Servants (RDB, <i>Reichsbund der Deutschen Beamten</i> )	1,700,000
National Socialist League of German Engineers (NSBDT, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Bund Deutscher Technik</i> )	140,000
SPONSORED ORGANIZATIONS	
German Women's Welfare (DFW, <i>Deutsches Frauenwerk</i> )	4,000,000
National Socialist Reich Gymnastics League (NSRL, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen</i> )	3,613,000
National Socialist Air Corps (NSFK, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Fliegerkorps</i> )	230,000
National Socialist League of Alumni (NSAhB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Altherrenbund</i> )	75,000
National Socialist Reich Colonial League (RkolB, <i>Reichskolonialbund</i> )	1,200,000
National Socialist Reich Veterans' League (RKrB, <i>Nationalsozialistischer Reichskriegerbund</i> )	2,307,250



National Socialist Reich League of Ex-Career Military  
(RTrB, *Nationalsozialistischer Reichstreubund ehemaliger  
Berufssoldaten*)

130,000

*Sources:* In sequence of organizations compiled from data in BA, NS 1/1116; 'Einsatz der SA' [unsgd.] (25 May 1940), BA, NS 23/412; Richard Korherr, Inspector for Statistics, to Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler (1 Mar. 1943), BA, NS 19/2097, 76-80 (own estimate for Allgemeine SS at 31 Dec. 1939; thanks to Jan Erik Schulte for indicating this source); *Deutsche Jugend*, 15; Hans-Helmuth Krenzlin, 'Das NSKK', in *Wehrhaftes Volk*, 266-306, here 278 (as at end 1938); Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women*, 149; Grüttner, *Studenten*, 324, 488 (figures for 1939); IfZ, MA 607/54952-54 (number for all lecturers); *Gesamtreichenschaftsbericht*, 12 (thanks to Rüdiger Hachtmann for indicating this source); Kater, *Doctors*, 63; Sunnus, *NS-Rechtswahrerbund*, 25; Feiten, *Lehrerbund*, 147, 181, 183 (as at 1 Jan. 1938 less Austria and Sudetenland); Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 319 (figure for 1940); Dreßen, *NS Kriegsofferversorgung*, 607; Giersch, *Reichsbund der Deutschen Beamten*, 633, 636 (as at 1 Jan. 1939); Ludwig, *Technik und Ingenieure*, 172, 195 (estimate, average of both refs.); Stephenson, *Nazi Organisation of Women*, 139; Bennett, *Der Weg des Sports*, 52; Völker, *Die deutsche Luftwaffe*, 130 (as at 1 Jan. 1939); Grüttner, *Studenten*, 321; Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich*, 389; Wilhelm Reinhard, 'Der NS-Reichskriegerbund', in *Wehrhaftes Volk*, 129-70, here 165 (as at 1 Jan. 1938, less Austria and Sudetenland), and Franz Schwede-Coburg, 'Der Reichstreubund ehemaliger Berufssoldaten', in *ibid.* 171-99, here 195 (as at end 1938).

and the Party membership's social structure came closer still to that of German society.<sup>27</sup> The same could be said of the divisions as well as the DAF and NSV, though not of the other affiliated and supervised organizations, which were of course made up primarily according to profession and occupation. Taking all of them together, however, the NSDAP was a true reflection of the social structure of Greater Germany. The exception was women, who were clearly under-represented in the Nazi organizations.

To be able to manage all its various branches, often numbering their members in the several millions, the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations had after 1933/4 built up a whole jungle of bureaucracies.<sup>28</sup> At the top level these were brought together in the Reich NSDAP executive (*Reichsleitung*, RL), which was not a collective decision-taking body but a hotchpotch of equal-ranking offices. Two of these authorities stood out above all the others, however, because their powers took in the divisions and affiliated organizations as well. This was true of the office of the deputy Führer (*Stellvertreter des Führers*, StdF) Rudolf Hess, which was created by Hitler on 21 April 1933 and by 1935/6 had developed into the central authority of the Party.<sup>29</sup> This came about thanks not least to the fact that Hess's staff, led

<sup>27</sup> On this see material in *Parteistatistik der NSDAP*, i, and comments by Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 72-153; Falter, 'Die parteistatistische Erhebung', and Gasten, *Aachen*, 167-225. For Austria Hag-spiel, *Die Ostmark*, 112-16; for the Sudetenland Zimmermann, *Die Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat*, 131-7.

<sup>28</sup> On the structure of the Reich NSDAP executive board at the outbreak of war see Mehnert, 'Organisation der NSDAP', and *Organisationsbuch*, 148-349. On the principles of the structure, which had already evolved before 1933, see Broszat, *Hitler State*, 42-56.

<sup>29</sup> On this see the seminal study by Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 8-39.



by Martin Bormann, was the only Party office involved in drafting government legislation. As Reich minister without portfolio the Führer's deputy had to have a hand in all the Reich's laws and administrative regulations, from the very first draft.<sup>30</sup> Put another way, there was from 1936/7 on hardly any act of legislation that had not been approved by Hess, Bormann, and their staff. The same applied to civil-service staff policy, as the deputy Führer was, by Hitler's decree of 27 September 1935, involved in the appointment and promotion of officials coming under the Führer and Reich chancellor.<sup>31</sup> The powers that Hess's staff wielded in the government sector made it the highest organ of the Party.

Besides this there was however another body in the Reich Party executive that came above all other Party authorities—the staff of the Reich treasurer (*Reichsschatzmeister*, RSchM) Franz Xaver Schwarz. From 1933 Schwarz held plenipotentiary powers from Hitler over all the NSDAP's financial affairs.<sup>32</sup> In the years after the seizure of power he succeeded in extending these to the Party's divisions and affiliated organizations. The Reich treasurer managed all the Party's income, made up primarily from members' subscriptions and the receipts from sales of the official Party newspaper, publications, and insignia, and had the right to examine the financial dealings of the whole of the Party. His office drafted the Party budget, paid the salaries of its full-time officials and employees, and managed Party-owned land and properties. In short, Schwarz was the sole head of all financial affairs within the Party. The deputy Führer and his office, on the other hand, had charge of the 'political management' of the Party apparatus.<sup>33</sup> Political management and financial administration were thus concentrated within the NSDAP's executive mainly in two different authorities—Hess's staff and the Reich treasurer's office.

In the summer of 1939 there were, within the Party's Reich executive, a total of forty-one Gau administrations plus the Nazi Party organization for Germans abroad, the *Auslandsorganisation* (AO). The Gauleiters were directly responsible to Hitler, and ran an area whose territory matched that of the

<sup>30</sup> On the StöF's powers see 'Leitfaden für Gesetz- und Verordnungsentwürfe: Zusammengestellt für den Dienstgebrauch des Reichs- und Preussischen Arbeitsministeriums' (n.d. [c. January 1937]), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 09782–85 [22050], BA, R 2/18378, together with Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*, 71–3. Here it must be borne in mind that legislation in the Nazi state had been in a state of change since 1935/6, such that hardly any more cabinet meetings were held; see Gruchmann, 'Reichsregierung', 202–12.

<sup>31</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1935, 1203. On the role of the StöF in staffing policy, which is not documented further here, see Mommsen, *Beamtentum im 3. Reich*, 62–123, and Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 40–73. On Nazi civil-service staffing policy in general, Ruck, *Korpsgeist und Staatsbewußtsein*; Stelbrink, *Der preussische Landrat*, and Mecking, *Immer treu!*

<sup>32</sup> Repr. in Lingg, *Verwaltung*, 71–2. On the powers of the RSchM and the structure of its authorities see the now outdated study by Lükemann, *Reichsschatzmeister der NSDAP*, 25–93, and the outline by Degreif, 'Franz Xaver Schwarz'.

<sup>33</sup> On this split between 'political management' and administration see the contemporary comments in Lingg, *Verwaltung*, 72–83.

Weimar Republic's electoral constituencies for the Reichstag.<sup>34</sup> The AO, forming a Gau of its own, embraced all Party members living in other countries.<sup>35</sup> A Gau executive comprised the same offices that were in the Reich executive.<sup>36</sup> They included the specialist branches such as the Gau treasury, education, and propaganda offices, plus the association offices among which the Gau DAF and NSV administrations were the most important.<sup>37</sup> From the disciplinary viewpoint these specialist and association offices came under the Gauleiter, while for their speciality they answered to the relevant offices in the Party Reich executive. Beside this, the Gau staffs had four further Party offices—those of the deputy Gauleiter (*Stellvertretender Gauleiter*, Stv.GL), the Gau staff office head, the Gau economic adviser (*Gauwirtschaftsberater*, GWB), and Gau inspector. The deputy Gauleiter in practice dealt with all Party affairs in the Gau, since the Gauleiter as Reich governor (*Reichsstatthalter*, RStH) combined his duties with other state offices as well.<sup>38</sup> The Gau staff office head had charge of the more technical aspects of running the Party business, the management of records, and communication with other Party organs.<sup>39</sup> The Gau economic adviser handled matters of economic and industrial policy, in which the Gau executive had a share in decision-making.<sup>40</sup> The Gau inspectors dealt with complaints made to the Gau executive.<sup>41</sup>

The next level of Party organization below the Gau was the *Parteikreis* (or district).<sup>42</sup> On 1 January 1940 there were in all 831 NSDAP Kreis administrations. The Kreis staff had basically the same structure as that of the Gau staff.

<sup>34</sup> Fundamental for a picture of the position of the Gauleiters within the Party is still Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter*, 56–73, 117–37, 195–212. In recent years there have been three biographies of Gauleiters, convincing in terms of neither content nor methodology. See Sauer, *Wilhelm Murr*; Zibell, *Jakob Sprenger*; and Schenk, *Hitlers Mann in Danzig*. To be recommended are the biographical studies by Priamus, 'Alfred Meyer'; Bajohr, 'Gauleiter in Hamburg'; Syré, 'Der Führer vom Oberrhein'; and Danker, 'Der schleswig-holsteinische NSDAP-Gauleiter Hinrich Lohse'.

<sup>35</sup> See McKale, *Swastika Outside Germany*, 43–82, and Müller, *Nationalsozialismus in Lateinamerika*, 21–91.

<sup>36</sup> The best analyses so far of an NSDAP Gau staff are provided by Grill, 'Nazi Movement in Baden', 422–55, and Mallmann and Paul, *Herrschaft und Alltag*, 81–114.

<sup>37</sup> These two organizations, because of their size, had on top of this and at all levels their own horizontal structures that the Party could control only with difficulty. Two examples are given in Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation*, 141–53, and Muskalla, *NS-Politik an der Saar*, 381–97.

<sup>38</sup> The importance of the deputy Gauleiter has long been neglected by researchers. There is a good description of his responsibilities in Wolfanger, 'Ernst Ludwig Leyser'. On the GL's role as Reich governor see Sengotta, *Reichsstatthalter in Lippe*, 111–19; Muskalla, *NS-Politik an der Saar*, 324–35, and Gebel, 'Heim ins Reich!', 100–17.

<sup>39</sup> On this office, which before the war was known as the Gau management office, see Grill, 'Nazi Movement in Baden', 426–7; Walzl, 'Als erster Gau', 99, and Zimmermann, *Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat*, 456, title 1.

<sup>40</sup> Kratzsch, 'Gauwirtschaftsberater', and id., *Gauwirtschaftsapparat*.

<sup>41</sup> Arbogast and Gall, 'Aufgaben und Funktionen des Gauinspektors', 152–6, and Arbogast, *Herrschaftsinstanzen*, 114–15.

<sup>42</sup> A basic work on the Bavarian Kreis management is the study by Roth, *Parteikreis*. Other titles are Ruppert, 'Kreisleiter in Lippe'; Arbogast, *Herrschaftsinstanzen*, 37–73; Klefisch, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP*, 5–77, and Meyer, 'Goldfasane', 53–72. An interesting biography of a Kreis leader is provided by Königstein, *Alfred Dirr*. An important collective biography of the KLs of Westphalia is Stelbrink, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP*.

The Party Kreis leader (*Kreisleiter*, KL) came under the Gauleiter, and the Kreis office head (*Kreisamtsleiter*, KAL) similarly under the relevant Gau office head. The Kreis staff was usually housed in a shared office building in the most important administrative town in the Party Kreis, though in major cities such as Berlin and Hamburg with several Kreis administrations they occupied a larger area. Their office hours were regular, from 0800h to 1600h Monday to Saturday.<sup>43</sup> Outside these hours there was a permanent on-call service, available even at night. Telephones and teletype (telex) machines, the offices' major means of communication, were manned round the clock.<sup>44</sup>

Below the Kreis administrations came the Party's local branches, or *Ortsgruppen*, whose territory was usually that of part of a town or city, or a village, and which covered the whole of Greater Germany in a veritable spider's web. On 1 January 1940 there were 28,606 local branches with at the head of each a local branch leader (*Ortsgruppenleiter*, OL).<sup>45</sup> The local branches were organized on the same pattern as the Gau and Kreis administrations, and worked on similar bureaucratic principles. To them were sent the directives and circulars from the Kreis administration, for the implementation of which the local branch leader could call on a sizeable staff. At horizontal level they had the services of their local branch office heads, who across the Reich numbered 174,171 in total. Vertically, they had under them 104,680 cell leaders (*Zellenleiter*, ZL) and 484,872 block leaders (*Blockleiter*, BL). All told, more than 1.1 million persons were active in the local branches, which thus represented more than 93 per cent of all Party officials. Looking at the function of these persons within the Party, one sees two different groups of officials: the Gau, Kreis, local branch, cell, and block leaders, known at the time as *Hoheitsträger*, or 'bearers of sovereignty', and the political leaders (PLs) working in the various horizontal structures.<sup>46</sup> In the NSDAP the 'leader principle' (*Führerprinzip*) reigned, that is to say those vested with sovereignty held total responsibility for their area of sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> The principle was however limited in one important area: the Party's *Hoheitsträger* did not wield direct authority to issue instructions over the systems of the divisions and affiliated organizations in their area of sovereignty;<sup>48</sup> these came under the competent political leaders,

<sup>43</sup> StA Detmold, L 113/394, 400, 407; StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/2, 15, 23, and *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP*, 130.

<sup>44</sup> Following on standing orders for the KL of Gau North Rhine-Westphalia issued by Gauleiter Alfred Meyer on 1 Jan. 1942, StA Detmold, L 113/1445, mentioned by Ruppert, 'Kreisleiter in Lippe', 208.

<sup>45</sup> The basic source on the structure of the NSDAP local branches is Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 67–139.

<sup>46</sup> On these two terms see the *Organisationsbuch*, 14–28a, 98–9.

<sup>47</sup> On the leader principle see Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 536; *Organisationsbuch*, 93, and Majer, *Grundlagen des nationalsozialistischen Rechtssystems*, 77–100.

<sup>48</sup> This problem was most strikingly apparent with the SA, SS, Hitler Youth, and NSKK, whose representatives on the Gau and Kreis staffs were not subordinate to the *Hoheitsträger* even in disciplinary matters. These organizations had already before 1933 freed themselves organizationally from the Party apparatus; see Seidler, 'Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahrkorps', 625–6; Longerich, *Die braunen Bataillone*, 93–109, and Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach*, 85–91.

TABLE 1.B.I.2. *Employment of NSDAP political leaders, as at 1 January 1940*

Position	Full-time	Voluntary	Total
Gau office leader	473	445	918
Other Gau officials	6,910	5,438	12,348
Gau—Total	7,383	5,883	13,266
Kreis leader	672	159	831
Kreis office leader	3,407	11,011	14,418
Other Kreis officials	8,829	44,725	53,554
Kreis—Total	12,908	55,895	68,803
Local branch leader	10	28,596	28,606
Cell leader	13	104,667	104,680
Block leader	22	484,850	484,872
Local branch office leader	406	173,765	174,171
Other local branch officials	443	356,263	356,706
Local branches—Total	894	1,148,141	1,149,035
Political leaders—Total	21,185	1,209,919	1,231,104

Sources: StdF, Dept. M, statement on political leaders conscripted into the Wehrmacht, as at 1 Jan. 1940, BA NS 6/317, 22. The social structure of Party officials has not yet been studied, and on this there is only Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 190–239.

on whom depended the extent to which the horizontal structures of the divisions and affiliated organizations could be bound by the *Hoheitsträger's* directives. The distribution of the political leaders at 1 January 1940 was as shown in Table I.B.I.2. From this table it can also be seen that the Party's structure beneath the Reich executive level consisted to more than 98 per cent of honorary officials. Only in the Gaue were the functionaries predominantly employed full-time. Most Party officials thus earned their living in a regular occupation, before devoting themselves to the Party's work in their free time.

The history of the NSDAP between 1933 and 1939/40 can be divided into two periods. In the seizure-of-power phase, which lasted until the autumn of 1935, it tried to reshape German society by revolutionary means. In the areas of the internal administration, Wehrmacht, and industry this 'Party revolution from below' was soon slowed down, because Hitler had, with the conservative elite in mind, spoken in favour of a slower and more measured approach. At the centre of the efforts to cushion the shock of the NSDAP's appropriation of power in these three policy areas stood the office of the deputy Führer. Hess, Bormann, and their staff took pains to fit the Party into the state's administrative structure. In cooperation with the Reich chancellery and the Reich ministry of the interior they succeeded in putting the relationship between the internal administration and the Party on a stable footing, which followed the principle of institutional separation between the state and the Party. They also worked energetically on reining in the military aspirations of the SA, and

on conserving the Wehrmacht's autonomy in the Nazi state. They further took steps to limit the influence on the economy of the middle-class groups in the Party. One exception to this was the 'de-Judaization' of commerce and industry, where the office of the deputy Führer supported wholeheartedly the Party's effort at radical penetration.

There then began, with the Nuremberg Party rally in September 1935 and the 'Nuremberg Laws', a second phase in the history of the NSDAP. The Party organization now went over to intensifying social control over the German population.<sup>49</sup> As recent regional and local research has shown, the NSDAP was from 1935/6 onwards a massive organ of social discipline.<sup>50</sup> On the one hand it sought to discipline its membership through a specific personnel policy, through the specialist 'schooling' of the Party cadre, and the ideological indoctrination of all those belonging to the Nazi organizations. On the other the NSDAP kept watch over the daily conduct of the German population, and in doing so took up police-like activities. Both areas of social control were at the time subsumed under the term 'political leadership' (*politische Führung*) or 'people management' (*Menschenführung*).<sup>51</sup> In the Third Reich there was scarcely any field of policy that did not fall under this concept. What such people management meant in individual cases always required interpretation, since the term was vague and could be given its meaning almost at will. This does not however alter the fact that after 1935/6 the Party's claim to such control in administration, Wehrmacht, and the economy was largely accepted.

From this acceptance stemmed the tasks that during the war the Nazi regime allocated to the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations. These were laid down during the preparations for mobilization, which had begun as early as 1933. Because any future military conflict would be conducted as a 'total war', authorities in the civilian administration, as well as the Reichswehr/Wehrmacht, were made ready for a war occurring. These measures were coordinated in the Reich defence committee (*Reichsverteidigungsausschuß*, RVA), which was set up immediately after the seizure of power and on which from April 1937 the deputy Führer also sat.<sup>52</sup> The Party's task in wartime were finally set out in paragraph 7 of the second 'Reich Defence Act'

<sup>49</sup> The starting point for this development was provided by a speech that Hitler gave during the Reich Party rally, in the afternoon of 13 September 1935, to a gathering of 100,000 Party officials; he gave the task of the Party as being 'the education of our people and the supervision of our people'; see *Parteitag der Freiheit*, 161, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 273.

<sup>50</sup> Agreed in arguing this are Grill, 'Nazi Movement in Baden', 328-409; Roth, *Parteikreis*, 269-304; Arbogast, *Herrschaftsinstanzen*, 255-63; Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 17-70; Wagner, *NSDAP auf dem Dorf*, 117-252; Meyer, 'Goldfasane', 37-108, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 271-327.

<sup>51</sup> On this see the editors' introduction in *Verwaltung contra Menschenführung*, 25-31.

<sup>52</sup> On the RVA see Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the *Truppenamt*'s organization department, minutes of the 2nd meeting of the working party of rapporteurs for Reich defence, 26 Apr.-22 May 1933, IMT, xxxvi. 220-9, doc. 177-EC. Up to the end of 1938 the RVA met fifteen times in all—Meinck, 'Reichsverteidigungsrat'. For the minutes of the various meetings see BA-MA RW 19/613.

of 4 September 1938; under this the deputy Führer had charge of 'forming the political will of the people', which he was to carry out with the help of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations.<sup>53</sup> This meant that in a war the deputy Führer was to call on the Party to take control of those sections of the population who were not fighting in the Wehrmacht. The reason for this was the Nazi regime's fear of a recurrence of 9 November 1918. Hitler and the military took the national right-wingers' 'stab in the back' legend—that the 'homeland' had stabbed the 'front' in the back, thus bringing about military defeat—as being the absolute truth; they wanted to take steps to prevent the same thing happening again.<sup>54</sup> A kind of division of labour was chosen for this: the police system was responsible for internal security, but the Party for political leadership, or 'people management'.

The deputy Führer was to make the preparations for mobilizing the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations. This task, from which only the SS was exempted, came under Dept. M of Hess's office.<sup>55</sup> This department, headed by Kurt Knoblauch, was to ensure that all full-time political leaders, needed in a war to carry on the Party's business, were listed as in a reserved occupation.<sup>56</sup> It further developed, in collaboration with the specialist offices of the war ministry (*Reichskriegsministerium*, RKM), work plans setting out in detail the Party's fields of activity in case of war.<sup>57</sup> For carrying out these tasks Dept. M called on its mobilization representatives in the Reich executive and the Gaue and Kreise.<sup>58</sup> Preparations for listing full-time Party officials as in a reserved occupation were completed in July 1939.<sup>59</sup> The Party's work plans were by this time also before the Wehrmacht high command (OKW).<sup>60</sup> All in all, the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations were, by the summer of 1939, ready to go to war.

<sup>53</sup> IfZ, MA 145-1/10287-10294, IMT, xxix. 316-27, doc. 2194-PS, here 322 (quotation). On this see Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv. 1-5.

<sup>54</sup> Mason, *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft*, 1-16.

<sup>55</sup> A seminal account of this is in Noack and Weißbecker, 'Die Partei als Rückgrat', 74-5.

<sup>56</sup> StdF, V, Dept. M 1/37 of 15 Apr. 1937, BA NS 6/355, 57-9. The reserved-occupation classification provided an opportunity for civilian administrations to make their full-time staff, needed for carrying on the work of their own authorities, exempt from military service or war work; see Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 376-7, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 850-4.

<sup>57</sup> On this see RKM/OBdW/W.A./L IV No. 1735/37 g.Kdos. (28 Oct. 1937), BA-MA RH 2/990a, 112, and StdF, Dept. M, work plans of the Reich executive of the NSDAP for the employment of the affiliated organizations in Case A circumstances (16 May 1938), BA NS 6/355, 13-52.

<sup>58</sup> The deputy heads of administration of the RL, Stv.GL, and KL acted as delegates: see Bormann directive 77/38 of 2 July 1938, BA NS 6/230, 2-3; listed in BA NS 6/146, 19; Orlow, *History of the Nazi Party*, ii. 260-1; and Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 130-1.

<sup>59</sup> Note on visit/file note (18 July 1939), BA NS 6/355, 3-8, here 3.

<sup>60</sup> StdF, Dept. M, guidelines and directives for the work of the Party in wartime (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 3-52. These work plans also went to the Gauleiters, and thence to KLs; StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppen.



## II. Mobilizing the Troops, and Moulding Minds and Behaviour at Home, September 1939 to April 1941

### I. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONNEL RESOURCES OF THE NSDAP AND ITS DIVISIONS AND AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

AFTER Hitler, early in the afternoon of 25 August 1939, gave the order to launch the attack on Poland, Dept. M of Hess's staff immediately informed its subordinate Party agencies of the fact.<sup>1</sup> It also ordered an immediate block to be placed on holiday leave, the cancelling of training courses and travel on mission, the setting up of a standby service, and the shift to wartime staffing levels. The department's priority was to ensure that the Party's work would carry on; most of all, it had to be certain that under wartime conditions the NSDAP had the necessary staff at its disposal. After Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939 Hess issued an order on the 'assembling of all Party forces in time of war'. The supreme principle of the Party's work was to be that the leaders of the Gaue, Kreise, and local branches could call upon everyone belonging to the Party, its divisions (apart from the SS), and affiliated organizations over whom it held disciplinary power.<sup>2</sup> The use made of the Party's staff was thus in war to be controlled directly by the various *Hoheitsträger*. For this, application for reserved-occupation status for full-time Party officials and staff had to be made to the conscription offices, and it was Hess's Dept. M that coordinated this. The application itself was a matter for the Party's representative for mobilization. Under a directive from Dept. M, the Party offices had in the first few weeks of a war to make do with the staff who had already been given reserved-occupation status during the preparations for mobilization.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile the Party's mobilization representatives were to ascertain how many of its political leaders had been conscripted from their areas of responsibility to serve in the Wehrmacht. This procedure was necessary because the NSDAP's 1938/9 reserved-occupation status had been

<sup>1</sup> Telegram from Knoblauch to M representatives with the RL, Reich service agencies and GL, g.Rs. (25 Aug. 1939), BA NS 6/355, 178. The Hess staff and civilian Reich authorities had been told of the onset of Case X (i.e. mobilization without public announcement) via RVA/OKW/WFA/L IVa No. 2065/39 g.Kdos., sgd. Keitel (25 Aug. 1939), extracts from which are repr. in *ADAP*, ser. D, vii. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Hess order 170/39 of 15 Sept. 1939, in *Verfügungen*, i. 32–3. In the Second World War Hess's staff and the 'bearers of sovereignty' succeeded more and more in having this demand satisfied; see Orlow, *History of the Nazi Party*, ii. 2, 239–40, 243–4, 277–8, 392–3, 441, 444; Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 403–30, and Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 90–108, 256–64. See, contra, Grill, *Nazi Movement in Baden*, 410–60.

<sup>3</sup> Knoblauch, II Az. 52 a/9 Sept. 1939, Diary No. 1455/39 g. (9 Sept. 1939), BA NS 6/355, 185–6.



limited to those holding a service record book, and those born 1910–12.<sup>4</sup> With the start of the Polish campaign the Wehrmacht however laid claim to other groups.<sup>5</sup> These included age groups that covered a particularly large number of political leaders. The NSDAP thus needed to begin by taking stock of its personnel policy before making further plans for the internal staffing of the Party. Further applications for reserved-occupation status could in any case not be made until the Polish campaign was over.<sup>6</sup>

On 1 January 1940 Hess's Dept. M then drew up a list of the political leaders who had been conscripted to the Wehrmacht. Out of 21,185 full-time Party officials there were 7,283 on 'active service'—equivalent, as may be seen from Table I.B.II.I, to 34.4 per cent of the whole. At this date, therefore, more than a third of all full-time officials of the Party were not available to carry on its work. Among those born 1910 and later the number of them serving with the Wehrmacht indeed represented 57.7 per cent. This was due to the fact that Hess had banned reserved-occupation applications for these age groups so as to provide political leaders younger than 30 with an opportunity for doing front-line service, which was a condition for making a career in the Party.<sup>7</sup> The full-time work of the Party thus fell progressively more on the shoulders of those born in 1900 and before.<sup>8</sup> In order that the Party should have greater certainty in planning its staffing as the war progressed, Dept. M of Hess's staff and the OKW came to an agreement in April 1940 that in future conscription offices would always accede to requests from the Party for reserved-occupation status.<sup>9</sup> From the viewpoint of Hess's staff this at least ensured that the Party alone would decide on what happened to its full-time officials.

For safeguarding the continuing work of the Party during the war it was not however enough just to retrieve a greater number of its full-time policy leaders who were doing military service; for the Party its honorary political leaders, who made up almost 98 per cent of the Party's leader corps, were in fact far more indispensable. Consequently Dept. M had since 1937/8 been keen to have

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Zander, Knoblauch's deputy in Dept. M of Hess's staff, briefing (29 Aug. 1938), BA NS 6/317, 1–3, here 2.

<sup>5</sup> Thus during mobilization at the end of August 1939 some of the 1915 year group and all those born in years 1916 and 1917 were placed 'on active service'. The Wehrmacht further laid claim to those untrained but eligible for military service born in 1906, 1907, 1918, and 1919. See Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v, 119–21, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 806–29.

<sup>6</sup> OKW/AHA/Ag/E(Vb) No. 2880/39 g (27 Sept. 1939), BA-MA RW 19/3139, 92–4, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 872.

<sup>7</sup> Knoblauch to M-representatives with RL, divisions and Gauleiters (12 Mar. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 132 01810 [24513], and BA R 55/915. This purpose was also served by the 'front/homeland swap' procedure, under which a full-time PL who was doing front-line service could after six months return to his old office if this were able to nominate another man to serve in his stead; see OKW/AHA/Ag/E(Vb) No. 3220/39 g (26 Oct. 1939), BA NS 6/356, 8; *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 307 02091–98 [24159]; BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Ludwig Grimm, and Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 301 (27 Oct. 1939).

<sup>8</sup> Knoblauch to M-representatives with RLs, divisions, and Gauleiters (27 Mar. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 132 01575–77 [24543], BA R 55/690.

<sup>9</sup> Knoblauch to M-representatives with RL, divisions, and Gauleiters (27 Mar. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 132 01575–77 [24543], BA R 55/690.

the most important honorary officials exempted from military service in a war. In principle, however, the Party could ask for reserved-occupation status only for its full-time staff, so Knoblauch, the head of Dept. M, in cooperation with the OKW worked out a procedure that could be applied to honorary officials as well. This involved what were termed exemptions, which like the reserved-occupation status were granted on a case-by-case basis. The Kreisleiters could in theory have asked their local conscription authority for exemption for every honorary political leader; but Dept. M had on 1 December 1937 laid on them the condition that exemption would be restricted to a particular group of local branch leaders (OLs).<sup>10</sup> In a war, the NSDAP was to make no applications in respect of other honorary political leaders. At 15 May 1939 a total of 9,620 honorary Party officials had been exempted, 95 per cent of them local branch leaders and 5 per cent Kreis heads of administration.<sup>11</sup> In a war, all other honorary political leaders could be called up, if for instance they were officers in the reserve, had done their military service and counted as having 'recent training', or fell in the liable age groups.

From September 1938 the Reich Organization Leadership (*Reichsorganisationsleitung*, ROL, headed—together with the DAF—by Robert Ley), had planned in a war immediately to undertake a comprehensive survey of the honorary staff available in the local groups.<sup>12</sup> To this end the Ortsgruppenleiter on 2 September 1939 carried out an immediate roll-call, directing their staff into their wartime duties, and identifying those who had been called up to the Wehrmacht.<sup>13</sup> Dept. M was supplied with the first figures for these by the ROL at the end of December 1939.<sup>14</sup> These show some differences in numbers between the honorary staff, as this had developed by the autumn of 1939/40, and the full-time officials. It is striking that, as Table I.B.II.2 reveals, on 1 January 1940 only 19.5 per cent of the Party's honorary political leaders had been called up to the Wehrmacht. This was a substantially lesser drain than the Party had to cope with among its full-time political leaders. There are several reasons for this: first of all, military service was for full-time officials a prerequisite to making a career in the Party, so that it was an attractive proposition to volunteer to serve for a limited period with the Wehrmacht, and indeed with the Waffen-SS. Secondly, Hess and Bormann, with public opinion in mind, made sure that the Party did not exempt too many of

<sup>10</sup> This applied to OLs who did not hold a service book, who had already passed the call-up ceiling age of 45 (55 in East Prussia), who were born 1901–8 and had not yet done their military service, and whose activity was essential to the war effort; see StdF, V Abteilung M 2/37 of 1 Dec. 1937, BA NS 6/355, 60–1, and the application form for exemption of a honorary OL, *I/JZ*, MA 1161/85463.

<sup>11</sup> Survey by Zander (16 May 1939), BA NS 6/317, 4–6, here 4.

<sup>12</sup> ROL's order to M-representatives 1/38 of 20 Sept. 1938, BA NS 6/355, 91–2, interpreted in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 329–30. These guidelines were sent to all OLs, and intended in a war to provide the basis for the local branches' mobilization of staff.

<sup>13</sup> StdF, Abteilung M, 'Anordnungen und Richtlinien für den Einsatz des Ortsgruppenleiters im Kriege' [Order and guidelines for employment of local branch leaders in wartime] (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 16–17, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 330–1.

<sup>14</sup> StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/15.

TABLE I.B.II.I. *Full-time NSDAP political leaders conscripted into the Wehrmacht, by post and year group*  
(as at 1 January 1940)

Full-time PLs by post	Born before 1900		Year groups 1901 to 1905			Interim figure for year groups up to 1905		Year groups 1906 to 1909			Year groups 1910 and younger		All year groups	
	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)		Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)		Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)
Gau office head	217	36 (16.6)	134	44 (32.8)		351	80 (22.8)	87	34 (39.1)		35	21 (60.0)	473	135 (28.5)
Other PLs	2,139	484 (22.6)	1,471	468 (31.9)		3,610	952 (26.4)	1,649	727 (44.1)		1,651	1,003 (60.8)	6,910	2,682 (38.8)
Gau—Total	2,356	520 (22.1)	1,605	512 (31.9)		3,961	1,032 (26.1)	1,736	761 (43.9)		1,686	1,024 (60.7)	7,383	2,817 (38.2)
Kreis leader	321	24 (7.5)	182	29 (15.9)		503	53 (10.5)	124	28 (22.6)		45	14 (31.1)	672	95 (14.1)
Kreis office head	1,102	134 (12.2)	822	181 (22.0)		1,924	315 (16.4)	843	325 (38.6)		640	398 (62.2)	3,407	1,036 (30.4)
Other PLs	2,738	593 (21.7)	1,835	507 (27.6)		4,573	1,100 (24.0)	2,006	758 (37.6)		2,250	1,230 (54.7)	8,829	3,088 (35.0)
Kreis—Total	4,161	751 (18.0)	2,839	717 (25.3)		7,000	1,468 (21.0)	2,973	1,111 (37.1)		2,935	1,642 (56.0)	12,908	4,221 (32.7)
Local branch leader	8	—	—	—		8	—	1	—		1	1 (100.0)	10	1 (10.0)
Cell leader	7	3 (42.9)	5	—		12	3 (25.0)	1	1 (100.0)		—	—	13	4 (30.8)
Block leader	7	3 (42.9)	4	1 (25.0)		11	4 (36.4)	6	1 (16.6)		5	3 (60.0)	22	8 (36.4)
Branch office head	231	37 (16.0)	75	15 (20.0)		306	52 (17.0)	60	22 (36.7)		40	20 (50.0)	406	94 (23.2)
Other PLs	232	51 (22.0)	78	20 (25.6)		310	71 (22.9)	59	21 (35.6)		74	46 (62.3)	443	138 (31.2)
Branch—Total	485	94 (19.4)	162	36 (22.2)		647	130 (22.9)	127	45 (35.4)		120	70 (58.3)	894	245 (27.4)
Total	7,002	1,365 (19.5)	4,606	1,265 (27.5)		11,608	2,630 (22.6)	4,836	1,917 (39.6)		4,741	2,736 (57.7)	21,185	7,283 (34.4)

*Sources:* StdF, Dept. M, statement on political leaders conscripted into the Wehrmacht as at 1 Jan. 1940, BA NS 6/317, 22. Gauleiters are not included in this table, as they were not required to do military service; see Zander coll., file note (27 Sept. 1940), BA NS 6/318, 68.

TABLE I.B.II.2. *Honorary NSDAP political leaders conscripted into the Wehrmacht, by post and year group (as at 1 January 1940)*

Full-time PLs by post	Born before 1900		Year groups 1901 to 1905		Interim figure for year groups up to 1905		Year groups 1906 to 1909		Year groups 1910 and younger		All year groups	
	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)	Total	Conscripted (in per cent)
Gau office head	304	61 (20.1)	90	27 (30.0)	394	88 (22.4)	30	13 (43.3)	21	11 (52.4)	445	112 (25.2)
other PLs	3,105	775 (25.0)	1,112	285 (25.6)	4,217	1,060 (25.1)	646	217 (35.6)	575	240 (41.8)	5,438	1,517 (27.9)
Gau—Total	3,409	836 (24.5)	1,202	312 (26.0)	4,611	1,148 (24.9)	676	230 (34.0)	596	251 (42.2)	5,883	1,629 (27.7)
Kreis leader	107	5 (4.7)	41	3 (7.3)	148	8 (5.4)	10	1 (10.0)	1	—1 (—) <sup>a</sup>	159	8 (5.0)
Kreis office head	7,480	1,704 (22.8)	2,233	635 (28.4)	9,713	2,339 (24.1)	947	320 (33.8)	351	125 (35.6)	11,011	2,784 (25.3)
other PLs	28,158	4,563 (16.2)	8,594	2,087 (24.3)	36,752	6,650 (18.1)	4,845	1,419 (39.3)	3,128	1,149 (36.7)	44,725	9,218 (20.6)
Kreis—Total	35,745	6,272 (17.5)	10,868	2,725 (25.1)	46,613	8,997 (19.3)	5,802	1,740 (30.0)	3,480	1,273 (36.6)	55,895	12,010 (21.5)
Local branch leader	17,844	2,947 (16.5)	6,174	1,304 (21.1)	24,018	4,251 (17.7)	3,103	800 (25.6)	1,475	605 (41.0)	28,596	5,656 (19.8)
Cell leader	62,578	9,777 (15.6)	20,882	3,765 (18.0)	83,460	13,542 (16.3)	13,108	2,921 (22.3)	8,099	3,139 (38.8)	104,667	19,602 (18.7)
Block leader	231,930	34,516 (14.9)	101,780	18,380 (18.1)	333,710	52,896 (15.9)	79,532	17,044 (21.4)	71,608	27,500 (38.4)	484,850	97,440 (20.1)
Branch office head	98,844	17,414 (17.6)	36,125	7,678 (21.3)	134,969	25,092 (18.6)	22,115	5,650 (25.6)	16,681	6,918 (41.5)	173,765	37,660 (21.7)
other PLs	186,740	23,884 (12.8)	73,344	11,505 (15.7)	260,084	35,389 (13.6)	51,823	10,929 (21.1)	44,356	15,873 (35.8)	356,263	62,191 (17.4)
Branch—Total	597,936	88,538 (14.8)	238,305	42,632 (17.9)	836,241	131,170 (15.7)	169,681	37,344 (22.0)	142,219	54,035 (38.0)	1,148,141	222,549 (19.4)
Total	637,090	95,646 (15.7)	250,375	45,669 (19.2)	887,465	141,315 (15.9)	176,159	39,314 (22.3)	146,295	55,559 (38.0)	1,209,919	236,188 (19.5)

<sup>a</sup> In the source document, there is a calculating error in the 'Kreis leader' line of the 'year groups 1910 and younger' column. To avoid having to amend the totals in the table, a negative value '—1' has been entered here.

Source: StdF, Dept. M, statement on political leaders conscripted into the Wehrmacht as at 1 Jan. 1940, BA NS 6/317, 22.

its full-timers.<sup>15</sup> And thirdly, 73.3 per cent of full-time officials were among those born in 1905 or before and not called upon to serve to the same extent as those born after 1910. It was not least the differing age structures of the two groups that made the situation with the honorary officials turn out better for the NSDAP than that with its full-time political leaders.

As a result of the increasing call-up of the (male) political leaders the Party's female staff took on ever-increasing importance during the war. Women could of course in principle be directed by the labour offices to special war-time duties, for example in the public authorities' emergency services or as 'labour deployment' in the armaments industry and commerce.<sup>16</sup> The civilian authorities had been making plans since 1937/8 for the deployment of women in a future war. As part of the preparations for a mobilization those women who would be needed by employers to carry on working even in wartime were assured of being exempted from other war work.<sup>17</sup> This was done by the employers asking the conscription offices for a 'guarantee' in respect of the female staff they were staking a claim on. As with the reserved-occupation applications, this procedure was in the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations coordinated by Dept. M of Hess's staff. The Party's officials dealing with mobilization decided which of the women working in its various offices were to be guaranteed to them when war came, and put in an application to Dept. M for each of them individually.<sup>18</sup> Dept. M collated all the applications and forwarded them to the regional labour offices. Guarantees in respect of full-time female staff in the Party related both to employees such as telephone operators, cleaners, and cooks and to skilled staff working with the NSV (mostly child-minders and nurses) and NSF women employees.<sup>19</sup>

By 15 May 1939 Dept. M had obtained guarantees on a total of 10,985 women, and 'blocked' 20,000 skilled women workers.<sup>20</sup> It is impossible to

<sup>15</sup> On public criticism of the Party's use of reserved-occupation status see the situation report by the Gauleiter for Westphalia-North to the StdF (6 Sept. 1939), StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Hauptleitung/22. Within the army, too, there was derision for the Party's alleged shirkers; see OKW/WFA/L II No. 2905/39 sgd. Keitel (16 Nov. 1939), YVA, JM 5274, repr. in Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 269. On the Party's bad reputation as a whole see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 160–8.

<sup>16</sup> On the preparations for the 'utilization of female labour' see the RWM circular on employment of women in the event of mobilization (19 Oct. 1938), Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 285–9, and OKW/WFA/L IV No. 1436/39 g.Kdos., sgd. Loßberg (10 July 1939), BA-MA RW 19/614, 5–14, repr. in *IMT*, xxxiii. 33, 145–60, doc. 3787-PS.

<sup>17</sup> A list of essential users, i.e. those civilian authorities needing to put in applications for reserved-occupation status for male staff, or to make sure of keeping female staff, can be found in Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv. 7–8.

<sup>18</sup> StdF, Abteilung M, 'Aufstellung der im Mob.-Fall benötigten Personen: Muster II (weibl.)' [Schedule of persons needed in the event of mobilization, pt. II (female)], (undated, c. Mar. 1938), BA NS 6/355, 9.

<sup>19</sup> StdF, V Abteilung M 3/37 of 6 Dec. 1937 together with supplement of 25 June 1938, *ibid.* 62–4.

<sup>20</sup> Survey by Zander (16 May 1939), BA NS 6/317, 4–6, here 6. The contingent of 20,000 skilled workers were guaranteed en bloc, without submission of individual applications. Of these, 18,000 worked for the NSV, representing just on 56 per cent of its female staff at that time; see Hammerschmidt, *Wohlfahrtsverbände*, 592.

tell, from these figures, how many of these women have to be counted as being full-time NSF leaders,<sup>21</sup> but there is some evidence that the 2,015 female staff guaranteed for the NSF were in fact full-time officials.<sup>22</sup> A few months after the war started, however, there arose the problem that the Reich labour minister rescinded all 'guarantees'. Hess's Dept. M refused to accept this ruling, on the ground that apart from anything else it was affecting the Party's female staff who 'in many offices had taken the places of Party comrades called to serve in the armed forces'.<sup>23</sup> In mid-January 1940 the Hess staff and Reich labour ministry evidently came to an agreement that female employees of the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations would be directed to work elsewhere only if the relevant Party official responsible for mobilization matters had approved such a measure. This arrangement, which applied to male Party employees as well, in practice gave the Party a right of veto over the deployment of its own staff. To keep its work going during the war it was important for the Party's offices to continue to be able to call on its female staff. On 28 October 1938 there were 124,725 full-time staff working in the NSDAP, including 33,099 women (26.5 per cent of the total).<sup>24</sup> By 1 August 1942 the Party already had 224,541 full-time staff, including 139,214 women (62 per cent).<sup>25</sup> These figures show two things: first, the Party tended during the war to replace officials called up to the Wehrmacht with paid staff; and secondly, the proportion of women within this group constantly rose. Evidently the value of women for the Party grew the longer the war lasted.

A similar development can be seen among the women working as volunteers in the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations. The first in line for such unpaid activity were the women members of the various organizations. One gets the strong impression that during the war the members of the NSF and

<sup>21</sup> The officials of the NSF were officially termed only 'leaders'; see *Organisationsbuch*, 266–73. Nazi ideology reduced women to their sole role as mothers; the taking on of political functions was explicitly not planned for them. The NSF's only task was to train 'leaders' who in turn would see to it that the women organized in the DFW were prepared for motherhood. On the difference between the sexes in the National Socialist state in general see Koonz, *Mothers*, 209–66.

<sup>22</sup> In 1939 the Reich Women's Executive (*Reichsfrauenführung*, RFF) and the forty-one Gau women's organization offices each had sixty established posts; see Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 290. Assuming that these were filled with full-timers, this means that in early 1939 there were 2,520 full-time women officials. On the 'guarantees' in the NSF generally see StdF, V Abteilung M 5/37/38 of 10 Aug. 1938, BA NS 6/355, 70–1.

<sup>23</sup> Note by Zander (22 Jan. 1940), BA NS 6/318, 33–5, here 33 (quotation).

<sup>24</sup> StdF, Abteilung M, 'Aufstellung über hauptamtliche Angestellte bei der Partei, den Gliederungen und angeschlossenen Verbänden im Altreich (ohne Österreich)' [Schedule of full-time employees of the Party, divisions, and affiliated organizations in the *Altreich* (excl. Austria)] (28 Oct. 1938), BA NS 6/316, 33–5. Many female staff were missing from this through not being reported to Dept. M in time. The true number will have been not 33,099 but 40,000 women.

<sup>25</sup> Schedules prepared for Bormann as of 1 Aug. 1942, BA NS 6/317, 104–7, 126–8. If one were to add to this that of the men, a total of 42,797 had been conscripted to the Wehrmacht and were thus not available to the NSDAP. A level of 76.5 per cent female staff would even be reached. This meteoric rise in the number of women working full-time for the Party moreover took place against the background of an overall stagnation in female employment; see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 882.

DFW were indispensable for the work of the Party.<sup>26</sup> This applied to both the externally directed people management and work within the Party itself. In local branches where there were staff shortages NSF women leaders had already been used instead of male political leaders since 1935/6. Frequently these women had been entrusted with the not unimportant posts of office manager or treasurer to the branch, or that of block leader, where they even ran ideological courses for men.<sup>27</sup> After 1 September 1939 the NSF's women executives developed more and more into a reserve pool of staff for the Party. Increasingly often they had to take over the duties of cell and block leaders who had been called up.<sup>28</sup> The same was true of the activities of the DAF and NSV cell and block wardens, which also had to be undertaken to an increasing extent by women from the NSF and DFW. The work of the DAF inside the factories, too, seems to have been shifted more and more onto women's shoulders.<sup>29</sup> The Reich women's leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink and Reich organization leader Robert Ley joined in calling, from 1940/1, for a further decentralization of the NSF's work.<sup>30</sup> Because of the shortage of staff in the Party and DAF this could only mean members of the NSF replacing male officials called up to the Wehrmacht.

Since September 1939 there had been a further drain on the staff resources of NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations, the reason for which had less to do with conscription to the armed forces. By early 1940 there were already loud complaints being made to Dept. M that 'as a result of the taking on of work in the new eastern territories, even [NSDAP] staff from the *Altreich* are having to be sent there'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the military conquest of the new territories was further depleting the Party's manpower, in two ways: first, many Party officials were taking over government offices in the occupied territories; and secondly the whole Party apparatus was being exported there, leading to a massive transfer of political leaders and Party employees.<sup>32</sup> It is

<sup>26</sup> In considering the importance of women in the war, research into the Nazi period has up to now concentrated too much on paid employment; see Winkler, *Frauenarbeit*, and Bajohr, *Hälfte der Fabrik*. Voluntary commitment has been left out of the picture. There is pertinent criticism of this in Dammer, 'Kinder', 245.

<sup>27</sup> There are various references to this in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 115–16, 165, 201, 285, 335.

<sup>28</sup> See the RFF's situation report for July–September 1940 (2 Dec. 1940), BA NS 22/860; comments in speeches at the conference of women heads of Gau NSF organization/personnel departments on 11–17 Aug. 1940, BA NS 44/48; special report on the use made of NSF and DFW since the beginning of the war (26 July 1940), StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, NSF/122, and Arbogast, *Herrschaftsinstanzen*, 93.

<sup>29</sup> Welfare of the 4m. women working in the factories fell to the DAF Women's Office, which came under the RFF. It was provided by women factory social workers, whose numbers doubled to 2,370 at the start of the war; see Scholtz-Klink, *Die Frau*, 319–58, here 321, 331. At the same time those of the DAF's male social workers in the factories fell by around a third. On the DAF's work in factories in general see Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 251–448.

<sup>30</sup> Ley to Bormann (1 July 1941), Akten der Partei-Kanzlei, pt. 1, fiches 117 08288–92 [25563], and BA NS 22/976; on the debate over a merging of the NSF and DFW, BA NS 1/2260.

<sup>31</sup> Minute by Zander (22 Jan. 1940), BA NS 6/318, 33–5, here 33 (quotation).

<sup>32</sup> On the export of the NSDAP to the conquered territories see Madajczyk, 'Hauptamt für Volkstumfragen'; Roth, 'Sozialpolitik'; Lilienthal, 'Lebensborn', 166–234, and Nolzen, 'Arbeitsbereiche der NSDAP'.



hard to estimate how many staff the NSDAP lost as a result, but survey on 1 August 1942 shows a total of only 422 full-time Party staff working in a Party office in the occupied territories, thus accounting for only 0.5 per cent of its entire male staff establishment.<sup>33</sup> This does not however include the Party officials running a government office in one of the occupied territories. A great many Party functionaries from the *Altreich* were working most of all in the administrative system of annexed areas of Poland, that is to say the 'Reichsgaue' of Danzig-West Prussia and the Wartheland.<sup>34</sup> Besides this it has to be borne in mind that the area of responsibility of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations had meanwhile expanded in the Gaue of Cologne-Aachen, the Moselland, Westmark, Baden, Styria, and Carinthia, since the Gau administrations there had also taken on the Party's work in the adjacent areas of Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Slovenia, annexed by the Nazi regime in 1940/1.<sup>35</sup> Hardly any new Party officials were recruited from among the ethnic Germans living in those areas. It is difficult to compile a clear picture of how the NSDAP's staffing resources developed from the start of the war, if only because of the lack of enough research on the subject, but one or two trends can nonetheless be described. The NSDAP had, on 1 January 1940, to give up 34.4 per cent of its full-time and 19.2 per cent of its honorary political leaders to the Wehrmacht. As there was at first no demobilization after the end of the Polish campaign—the Wehrmacht on the contrary calling up more new year groups—it may be assumed that the Party organization lost even more of its staff. On a rough estimate the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations were between 1 January 1940 and 15 May 1941 working with at most two-thirds of their pre-war staff establishment.<sup>36</sup> An attempt was therefore made to overcome this shortage first by recruiting women, and secondly by mobilizing hitherto inactive Party members who by various means of compulsion were brought to play a part in NSDAP activities.<sup>37</sup> All things considered,

<sup>33</sup> Combined figure based on the data this contains in respect of the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Government-General, the Netherlands, the Wegener operational staff working in Norway, and the armistice commission in Metz, BA NS 6/317, 29.

<sup>34</sup> The opinion of Rebentisch, *Führerstaat*, 163–88. There are several comments on the build-up of the NSDAP in these two 'Reichsgaue' in Majer, 'Fremdvölkische', 317–458, 627–37, 720–846.

<sup>35</sup> The Party organization of these border Gaue was in 1940/1 and 1942 extended to the annexed territories of Eupen-Malmedy, Luxembourg, Lorraine, Alsace, Lower Styria, and Upper Krain; see Schärer, *Annexionspolitik*, 168–74; Dostert, 'Luxemburg', 241–5; Wolfanger, *Nationalsozialistische Politik*, 80–96; Kettenacker, *Volkstumspolitik*, 207–16; Karner, *Steiermark*, 134–5, and Walzl, 'Als erster Gau', 242–3.

<sup>36</sup> The figures varied widely from one NSDAP organization to the next. In the SA's case 45 per cent of its staff were away on military service on 25 May 1940; see account of deployment of the SA, BA NS 23/412, together with a report by the SA high command (23 June 1941), IMT, xxxiv. 34, 46–55, doc. 4011-PS. There was a similar situation in the Hitler Youth, which had given up almost half its top and middle leadership corps to the Wehrmacht; see contemporary data in Kaufmann, *Das kommende Deutschland*, 213, and a letter from Gottlob Berger, head of the SS-Ergänzungsamt, to Himmler (13 Dec. 1939), repr. in *Deutsche Jugend*, 315–16. See contra Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, xlvii. 8, with partly conflicting data.

<sup>37</sup> For instance by the threat of exclusion from the Party if participation was avoided without showing 'valid reasons'; see Hess order 52/40 of 1 May 1940, BA NS 6/820, 97, mentioned in Reibel, 'NSDAP-Ortsgruppen', 114–16, and id., *Fundament der Diktatur*, 335.

the NSDAP functioned well in the run-up to the attack on the Soviet Union, even though there were a few problems with short-staffing, mainly among the local branches.

## 2. THE HITLER YOUTH, 'YOUTH SERVICE', AND THE 'PROTECTION OF YOUTH'

Early in September 1939 the Nazi regime also began increasingly to entrust war-related activities to the nearly 9 million boys and youths aged between 10 and 18. The central role in mobilizing the nation's youth for war fell on the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*, HJ). Since the introduction of youth service on 25 March 1939 all children and young persons were organized in the HJ and its various sub-organizations.<sup>38</sup> Boys and girls aged 10 to 14 belonged to the German Young People (*Deutsches Jungvolk*, DJ) and League of Young Girls (*Jungmädelsbund*, JM) respectively, boys from 14 to 18 to the Hitler Youth, and girls and young women aged 14 to 21 to the League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*, BDM).<sup>39</sup> To make it possible to deal with these young people, the HJ had formed a massive organization with at its peak the Reich Youth Leadership (*Reichsjugendführung*, RJF), structured at regional and local levels into the *Gebiet*, *Bann*, *Stamm*, and *Gefolgschaft*.<sup>40</sup> In mid-1939 around 8.8 per cent of all Hitler Youth members were leaders at one or other of these organizational levels.<sup>41</sup> There was in principle no limit to how far a HJ leader could rise in the internal hierarchy of the Nazi youth organizations; what was needed for it was a specific political 'proof of suitability'. One possibility was offered by the Hitler Youth special units, for which one could volunteer and which put their members through a selection procedure. These units included the Marine-, Motor-, Air-, and Signals-HJ, the music units, and—for young women aged 17–21—the BDM 'Faith and Beauty' branch.<sup>42</sup> Service in the special units was an extra activity, and had to be carried out in addition to the duties compulsory in the Hitler Youth. Those prepared to undertake such supplementary service could count on promotion within the leaders' corps.

<sup>38</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1939, 710–12. Documents on the origin of 'youth service' are repr. in *Auch du gehörst dem Führer*, 84–7; accounts of it in Jürgens, *Geschichte des BDM*, 107–15, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 270–89, esp. 288 n. 169.

<sup>39</sup> Young Jews and first-degree half-Jews were excluded from the Hitler Youth; see YVA, O.2/1138–9; *Vorschriftenhandbuch der Hitler-Jugend*, ii, 796–9, together with documents in *Betrogene Generation*, 170–88. After the introduction of youth service, first-degree half-Jews were only made liable for this, that is to say were not formally taken into the HJ; see BA NSD 43/111; *Auch du gehörst dem Führer*, 38, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 284.

<sup>40</sup> On the structure of the HJ see *Organisationsbuch*, 437–64, and Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 42–9.

<sup>41</sup> The HJ leaders' corps is dealt with at length in Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 305–67, here 323 n. 72. In mid-1939 the HJ had 765,548 full-time and honorary leaders and just on 8,700,000 members.

<sup>42</sup> Pahlmeyer and Spankeren, *Hitlerjugend in Lippe*, 194–200, and Hering and Schilde, *Das BDM-Werk*, 19–55.

The main duty of a Hitler Youth leader was to shape the content of Hitler Youth service. The first part of this took place on Wednesday evenings as a social gathering, and served the purpose of ideological training.<sup>43</sup> The second part was for Saturdays, when the boys underwent pre-military training while the girls in the BDM followed courses in first aid, handicrafts, cultural activities, and took lessons in housewifery and the care of infants.<sup>44</sup> A variety of youth camps and trips, segregated by sex, completed the range of activities. The effects of socialization of the young in the Hitler Youth are disputed;<sup>45</sup> recent empirical research does however tend to support the view that the Nazi youth organizations achieved a high measure of conformity among the young.<sup>46</sup> It has, for instance, been almost unanimously agreed that girls gladly took advantage of what the BDM had to offer, in order to emancipate themselves from their parents' home and the Catholic Church.<sup>47</sup> The male Hitler Youth went in for radical anti-Jewish violence and terrorized Catholic youth organizations and young Poles, matching up to the Reich Youth Leader's ideal picture of their being a paramilitary band of 'political fighters'.<sup>48</sup>

When the war began the RJF and its subsidiary organs set the young of the Hitler Youth to a greater extent to 'war auxiliary service' in agriculture, the public authorities, and hospitals. These activities as auxiliaries served the purpose of bridging the staffing gaps that had arisen through the calling-up of male staff to the Wehrmacht. War auxiliary service by young people was really intended to have been quickly brought to an end after a demobilization; but when the war continued it soon became a permanent institution that, given the difficult troop replacement situation, took on far from negligible importance.<sup>49</sup> According to a contemporary account by an office head in the RJF, there were at the end of 1939 almost 1.1 million young persons doing war auxiliary service.<sup>50</sup> From February 1940 the Wehrmacht too recruited young auxiliaries to

<sup>43</sup> On the organizing of these evenings and on ideological training in the HJ see the documents in *Führung und Verführung*, 354–7, and Pahlmeyer and Spankeren, *Hitlerjugend in Lippe*, 152–63.

<sup>44</sup> Covered at length by Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 55–66, and Kinz, *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, 125–276.

<sup>45</sup> Klönne, 'Jugendprotest', 531–54, and id., *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 127–42, feels that among most of the young service in the Hitler Youth was a subject of scorn, and that the HJ organizations ultimately failed in their aim of achieving the fullest possible integration of 10- to 18-year-olds in the Nazi regime. On the other hand Stachura, 'Das Dritte Reich und die Jugend-erziehung', 235–6, stresses that for many young persons activity in the HJ was attractive since it could bring social and vocational advantages.

<sup>46</sup> Such at least is the thrust of Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, pp. xxii–xxiii, 856–7.

<sup>47</sup> Klaus, *Mädchen im Dritten Reich*, 11, 200–1; Möding, 'Ich muß irgendwo engagiert sein', 266–8; Jürgens, *Geschichte des BDM*, 197–204; Hering and Schilde, *Das BDM-Werk*, 33–5, and—with a hesitant opinion—*Auch du gehörst dem Führer*, 189–200, 245–50, 269–76. Generally Reese, *Straff, aber nicht stramm*, and Kock, 'Man war bestätigt'.

<sup>48</sup> Buddrus, 'Wir fahren zum Juden'; Pahlke, *Trotz Verbot*, 151–4, and Pallaske, *Hitlerjugend*, 123–76.

<sup>49</sup> On the manpower replacement situation in general *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, esp. 904–40.

<sup>50</sup> Kaufmann, *Das kommende Deutschland*, 212; Schaar, *Artur Axmann*, 177–82, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 44–6. This war auxiliary service was performed outside the regular HJ activities; see the excerpt from the Hitler Youth 'war service plan' repr. in *Deutsche Jugend*, 318–20.

plug the widening manpower gap in the armed services' home stations. The military authorities simply asked the RJF, via the OKW, for what they needed, and the RJF turned to its Gebiet and Bann offices to meet these requests.<sup>51</sup> Care was taken to make use of the youths as close as possible to their homes, so as not to worry their parents unnecessarily.

War auxiliary service was one of the reasons why, after the outbreak of war, the RJF and Hitler Youth stepped up their measures of social control over young people. Boys and girls doing war auxiliary service were now subject to other influences besides the home and school. In general the HJ's social control covered the whole of their daily lives, that is to say school, work activity, Hitler Youth service, and how they used their free time. Already in two orders on the mobilization of the HJ and BDM produced by the relevant offices in the Wehrmacht and Dept. M in the summer of 1939 both youth organizations were tasked with caring, when war came, 'for the organization, direction, training, discipline, and guiding of their members'.<sup>52</sup> Under war youth service conditions this meant that the HJ and BDM had to supervise a total of 9 million young people. The Hitler Youth's main instrument of youth control policy was the Patrol Service (*Streifendienst*, SRD), whose members at the outbreak of war are estimated at 75,000 youths aged 15–17.<sup>53</sup> This special formation in the Hitler Youth was designed first to monitor how far the young were observing the government's laws and regulations, and secondly to keep a watch on the behaviour of HJ members and prevent all actions 'likely to impair others' respect for the Hitler Youth'.<sup>54</sup> To this end the SRD carried out regular patrols in public places, Hitler Youth premises, youth hostels, and all possible meeting places for the young. Any breaking of the law had to be reported to the criminal police (*Kriminalpolizei*, Kripo). The SRD could not however itself make arrests, but had to wait until the local police took a hand; it was—at least in theory—to play only a surveillance role. In fact patrol service members often ignored this, particularly in the persecution of homosexuals where the SRD besides included adults in their sweeps.<sup>55</sup> The SRD developed

<sup>51</sup> This was done in accordance with the agreement between the OKW and RJF on the use of the HJ in Wehrmacht establishments (5 Feb. 1940), see Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 7. Youngsters serving as auxiliaries with the Wehrmacht performed a range of duties: members of the HF and BDM did office and clerical work for military authorities close to where they lived. They were also used as signals traffic assistants by the army, Luftwaffe, and navy.

<sup>52</sup> The quotation comes from StdF, Abteilung M, 'Anordnungen über den Einsatz der HJ im Kriege' [Order on use of the Hitler Youth in wartime] (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 49. An earlier version of the document is repr. in part in *Deutsche Jugend*, 167–8; Abteilung M, 'Anordnungen über den Einsatz des BDM im Kriege' (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 52. On the army's part in these plans see BA-MA RH 2/990a, 113–15. On mobilization of the BDM see Jürgens, *Geschichte des BDM*, 116–25.

<sup>53</sup> On the SRD see Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 47–106; Nolzen, 'Streifendienst', and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 369–88.

<sup>54</sup> RJF, Guidelines for the work of Hitler Youth, AR HJ of 1 June 1938, *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 916–35, here 919 (quotation), partially repr. in *Betrogene Generation*, 303–6.

<sup>55</sup> LA Berlin, Rep. 358–02/120528, 121662, 125434, 125726, and Pretzel and Roßbach, *Homosexuellenverfolgung*, 37–8.

more and more into an auxiliary force acting as an informer network for the regular police.

The Nazi regime's battle against 'youth criminality' was stepped up appreciably after the start of the war. On 4 October 1939 a decree on 'protection against young serious offenders' was published making it possible for all young people over the age of 16 to be punished as adults.<sup>56</sup> On 1 February 1940 the ministerial council for the defence of the Reich (*Ministerrat für die Reichsverteidigung*, MinRfdRV) decided to set up 'police youth education camps' in which to intern 'delinquent young persons'.<sup>57</sup> A further measure against alleged youth delinquency was Himmler's 'Police Order for the Protection of Youth' of 9 March 1940, under which young persons under the age of 18 not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian could no longer 'hang around' in a public place after nightfall, nor after 2100h be in bars and restaurants, theatres, or cinemas.<sup>58</sup> They were further forbidden to consume alcohol in inns and restaurants, and to smoke in public. Himmler's order resulted from the Nazi-specific interpretation of the First World War, according to which the 'delinquent' young workers said to have 'hung around' in public places contributed to the 'stab in the back' of 9 November 1918.

For the SRD the 'protection of youth' order brought two new activities: first, the conduct of the young had to be monitored for their consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and secondly there was a greater need than before for night patrols to check on observance of the curfew. To coordinate further action on the 'monitoring of young persons' the RJF ultimately issued fresh guidelines for the patrol service, on 1 June 1940.<sup>59</sup> To the previous tasks of the patrols were now added checks on inns, ice-cream parlours, dance-halls, fairgrounds, variety theatres, shooting-galleries, and amusement arcades, together with keeping a watch on cinemas and for young persons drinking or smoking in public. The powers of the patrols, too, were changed; SRD members could now carry out 'arrests of those caught in the act', if necessary using physical force.<sup>60</sup> Those arrested by the SRD were handed over to the criminal police who then initiated disciplinary proceedings. A first offence against the 'police

<sup>56</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1939, 2000, and Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich*, 910–11. This meant that the young could also be sentenced to death. For details see Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 399–421.

<sup>57</sup> Minutes of the meeting are repr. in *Betrogene Generation*, 306–7. On the MinRfdRV see Rebentisch, *Führerstaat*, 117–32.

<sup>58</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1940, 499–500, excerpts with incorrect source references repr. in *Deutsche Jugend*, 323–5. On the debate on youth delinquency see Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend*, 148–63, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 422–61.

<sup>59</sup> RJF, guidelines for the work of the Hitler Youth, AR. 8/40 of 1 June 1940, entitled 'monitoring of the danger to youth', *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 936–79. On implementation in the regions see the situation report by the HJ authority for Schwabia (9 Oct. 1940), StA Augsburg, HJ-Gebiet Schwaben/27.

<sup>60</sup> This relied on § 127, para. 1 of the *Strafprozeßordnung* (StPO), which ran: 'If a person is caught or found in the act of committing an offence and is suspected of intending flight or cannot at once be identified, then anyone is authorized, even without the order of a court, to apprehend him'; see *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 951. On the penal legislation see Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich*, 1049–91.

order on the protection of youth' attracted a warning or caution; a repetition could bring a fine and caution. Subsequent stages of sanction were appearance in the public prosecutor's office, imprisonment, being sentenced to corrective training, and—as a final measure by the police—being sent to one of the notorious youth protection camps.<sup>61</sup> In this the SRD had some considerable say, since before deciding on such a move the criminal police office in question had to ask the opinion of the head of the HJ Gebiet, who in turn consulted his Gebiet SRD inspector.<sup>62</sup> Even with the less severe punishments the Hitler Youth, in the shape of the SRD, had always to be consulted by the police authorities. The SRD's activities could thus have far-reaching results for the young persons concerned.

In 1940 offences against the 'Order on the Protection of Youth' came to be the most important area of SRD activity. A report from the administrative head of the Breslau (Wrocław) district for the period October–December 1940 mentions more than 4,000 infringements of the order attracting punishment by the police. It can be assumed that a high proportion of these had been reported by the HJ patrols. The SRD was particularly active in the Reich's industrial heartlands—the Rhine/Ruhr area and Upper Silesia.<sup>63</sup> Further out in the country, however, many SRD units had been suffering from an acute dearth of numbers, and the Kripo posts were so thin on the ground that it was no longer possible for them to carry out investigations together.<sup>64</sup> As a result, members of the SRD often acted on their own. In Immenstadt im Allgäu, for example, there were arguments—which came to blows—between two SRD members and a cinema owner who forbade them to check on youngsters in his cinema because there was no policeman patrolling with them.<sup>65</sup> Apart from such grey areas in which the SRD worked, many of its members displayed criminal tendencies as well. One local patrol leader tried to force a 15-year-old girl, who was doing her year of labour service in a barracks and was making her way home after 2000h, to have sexual relations with him by leading her to believe she was committing an offence against the police order on the protection of youth but that if she 'showed her appreciation' he would not report her to the Kripo.<sup>66</sup> Other patrols carried out sweeps of their own accord, during

<sup>61</sup> On corrective training in Westphalia see Kuhlmann, *Erbkrank oder erziehbar?* On the two youth protection camps in Moringen, Lower Saxony, and Uckermark, Brandenburg, see Peukert, 'Arbeitslager und Jugend-KZ'; Muth, 'Jugendschutzlager Moringen'; Hepp, 'Vorhof zur Hölle'; and Neugebauer, *Der Weg*.

<sup>62</sup> RJF, RS 5/42 of 18 Feb. 1942, *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 978–9.

<sup>63</sup> *Jugendkriminalität*, 140–62, here 153.

<sup>64</sup> Monthly report by a Bannführer of the SRD (1 Nov. 1940), StA Augsburg, HJ-Gebiet Schwaben/49. Cooperation between SRD and police was even so regarded by the RJF as being very good; see the ordinance by the RJF Artur Axmann (14 Nov. 1940), *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 970. There were clearly differences in the SRD's relationships with the criminal police (Kripo) and with the Gestapo; see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/9213.

<sup>65</sup> Report by SRD-Gefolgschaftsführer Immenstadt to the BannF of HJ Allgäu (22 Oct. 1940), StA Augsburg, HJ-Gebiet Schwaben/48. The SRD could not operate inside public buildings without being accompanied by the police; see *Vorschriftenhandbuch*, ii. 936–79, here 938, 952.

<sup>66</sup> BannF SRD Memmingen to BannF HJ Memmingen (22 Jan. 1942), StA Augsburg, HJ-Bann Memmingen/57.



which they arrested juveniles, dragged them into the buildings of the local NSDAP branch or the Hitler Youth centres, and beat them up.<sup>67</sup>

The uncontrolled punishment practices of the SRD demonstrate a further aspect of the Hitler Youth's youth control policy. Basically, juveniles found guilty of an offence against state laws or police regulations had not just the penalty from the police or law authority to fear: there would be further punishment from the Hitler Youth itself. Here, the HJ judicial system took on a special importance. At its top stood the HJ legal affairs office of the RJF.<sup>68</sup> In each Gebiet and Bann of the Hitler Youth there was a legal adviser (*Rechtsreferent*) who in collaboration with the personnel offices and the SRD in his territory punished any and every instance of aberrant conduct by an HJ member.<sup>69</sup> Below Bann level the relevant HJ leaders were responsible for disciplining their members. The HJ judicial system had a comprehensive disciplinary code to base itself on, with a sophisticated tariff of sanctions on members of the Hitler Youth. The disciplinary code laid down that any behaviour was to be punished that 'offends against good order in the Hitler Youth, or harms or endangers the honour of the Hitler Youth community, its public reputation, or comradeship'.<sup>70</sup> Detailed instructions as to what sort of behaviour was meant by this were issued by the offices of the RJF in innumerable implementing rules.

In the Hitler Youth there were a host of offences that could attract penalties from the internal sanctioning bodies. One important means of sanction was the 'youth service detention', introduced in September 1940. Limited to males aged 14 to 18, this consisted of 'short-term incarceration, designed to have a shock effect' and was imposed for 'particularly serious infringements of discipline'.<sup>71</sup> One 17-year-old, for instance, was reported by the SRD for a total of seven cases of offending against the 'protection of youth' order and avoiding youth service. The HJ tribunal concerned came to the view that his conduct called 'in the present times for the firmest measures to bring him to the necessary discipline and order', and ordered three days' detention.<sup>72</sup> A *Jugendgenosse* (i.e. a rank-and-file member of the Hitler Youth) who had slipped a phrasebook to a French prisoner of war was sentenced to one day's detention.<sup>73</sup> Although this was a Hitler Youth punishment, it was always carried out by the criminal

<sup>67</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/23599, and Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend*, 169.

<sup>68</sup> This was a very small office, with only 10–15 full-time staff; see Hauptbannführer Hess, 'Die Gerichtsbarkeit der Hitler-Jugend im Kriege', repr. in *Der Hitler-Jugend-Richter*, 4 (1941), June, 2–3. To this belonged the HJ supreme court, headed by Walter Tetzlaff. On the constitution of HJ courts in general see Tetzlaff, *Disziplinarrecht*, 60–2, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 388–98.

<sup>69</sup> On the HJ-Rechtsreferenten see Wolff, 'Hitlerjugend', 655–60.

<sup>70</sup> On the HJ disciplinary code see Hartmann Lauterbacher, head of RJF staff, order of 26 Apr. 1940, repr. in *Zucht und Ehre*, 1–6. The quotation follows the version of 19 May 1941, repr. in Tetzlaff, *Disziplinarrecht*, 109–28. On this see Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 59–60.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted from Tetzlaff, *Disziplinarrecht*, 41. On 'youth service detention' see Schaar, *Arthur Axmann*, 226–7.

<sup>72</sup> *Hitler-Jugend-Richter*, 4 (1941), June, 9. On sanctions for refusing to do compulsory youth service see the documents in *Betrogene Generation*, 323–5, and *Auch du gehörst dem Führer*, 93–5.

<sup>73</sup> Detention order repr. in *Hitler-Jugend-Richter*, 5 (1942), Feb., 9.



police, who incarcerated the delinquents over one or more consecutive weekends.<sup>74</sup> All that was needed for this temporary depriving of liberty was a decision from a Hitler Youth tribunal. Youth service detention would clearly seem to have been very frequently ordered, since the Reich Youth Leader issued a notice to lower-level offices to make more sparing use of this punishment. Figures are available only for the period 1 November 1942–1 November 1943; according to these, youth service detention was, over the whole Greater German Reich, imposed in 3,178 cases.<sup>75</sup>

The Hitler Youth's system of sanctions came into play for both internal offences and those by HJ members against the law. The SRD monitored the conduct of HJ members on HJ service and during their free time, and the relevant HJ leaders and tribunals then meted out punishment for deviant behaviour. The SRD identified youngsters who had committed one of the offences in question, and reported them to the appropriate HJ leader, HJ tribunal, or legal adviser. Depending on the severity of the offence the accused were summoned for interview with a representative of the HJ tribunal.<sup>76</sup> With the less serious offences the HJ leader concerned decided by himself what punishment to administer; otherwise, the case was passed up the chain. One can only hazard a guess at how many juveniles were punished by the HJ tribunals in the first two years of the war. According to one statistic from the RJF's Hitler Youth legal affairs office, a total of 2,701 persons were expelled from the HJ between July 1939 and August 1941.<sup>77</sup> Expulsion was however a relatively rare sentence, as the HJ tribunals could resort to it only when all other disciplinary measures had been exhausted.<sup>78</sup> The true extent of sanctions against the young inside the Hitler Youth can rather be gauged from the RJF's crime statistics; according to these, a total of 31,480 juveniles were convicted of an offence by a HJ authority in 1939, and 17,173 in the first half of 1940.<sup>79</sup> For the war years, therefore, an average of 30,000 HJ punishments a year may be assumed.

### 3. THE STRUGGLE OVER THE UNITY OF HOMELAND AND FRONT: 'COMFORTS FOR THE TROOPS' AND 'WEHRMACHT WELFARE'

When the military conflict between Germany, Britain, and France began in September 1939, it became increasingly important for the Nazi regime—given its own interpretation of the First World War—to demonstrate the closeness

<sup>74</sup> Youth service detention (*Jugenddienststarrest*) must not however be confused with imprisonment of a juvenile (*Jugendarrest*), which could be ordered by the police and courts and was not a Hitler Youth punishment; see Wolff, *Jugendliche vor Gericht*, 127–41.

<sup>75</sup> Tetzlaff, *Disziplinarrecht*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> For homosexual offences by HJ members, that is to say against § 175 *Reichsstrafgesetzbuch* (RStGB), this was invariably the case; see the records of hearings, presented as court documents, by HJ-Gebietsführung Berlin, LA Berlin, Rep. 358–02/107884, 110889, 121662. On sanctioning practice in respect of homosexual transgressions in the HJ see Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle*, 87–94, 212–15, 267–72, 323–6.

<sup>77</sup> Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 89.

<sup>78</sup> Tetzlaff, *Disziplinarrecht*, 45–7.

<sup>79</sup> *Jugendkriminalität*, 40, Tab. 14.

between the population remaining behind in the homeland and the soldiers at the front. If the alleged 'stab in the back' of the fighting front was not to happen again, there needed to be a deep bond between the home and the front, not least through participation by those at home in ensuring the morale and physical well-being of the troops.<sup>80</sup> Up to 1938/9, however, neither the Wehrmacht nor the NSDAP had made any preparations for involving the population in caring for the troops. The Wehrmacht had insisted that the 'ideological education and spiritual care of the soldiers in time of war' was a matter for the officer in charge of them, who for this should fall back on the newspapers, periodicals, and field libraries the OKW made available.<sup>81</sup> Hess's Dept. M, in turn, had during the mobilization of the Party organization in 1938/9 deliberately refrained from entrusting the *Hoheitsträger* or propaganda offices with the task of welfare for the troops in a future war.<sup>82</sup> In any case the Party at that time had relatively little influence on the Wehrmacht's 'internal service' on which devolved such widely varying matters as disciplinary justice, the ideological training of officers and other ranks, Wehrmacht chaplaincy, and measures for troops' welfare.<sup>83</sup> All these were the responsibility of the military authorities, so it was logical that the OKW should claim soldiers' welfare as something that was solely and wholly the Wehrmacht's concern.

A number of changes however soon came about during the campaign in Poland. First, Hess laid down that in future the Party's Kreis leaders should, together with the local conscription offices, supply the troops with their hometown newspapers.<sup>84</sup> At the same time many Kreis- and local leaders took to supporting Party members who had been called up by sending them letters and parcels.<sup>85</sup> The NSDAP saw such measures as essential for maintaining contact

<sup>80</sup> Already in the First World War a wave of solidarity had swept the population in Germany, with the troops at the front being supported through a wide range of measures. Eminent among these was the *Frauendienst* (women's service), which from early in 1915 organized public collections and sewed clothing for the soldiers on a grand scale. For an overall picture see Koshar, *Social Life*, 127–50.

<sup>81</sup> OKW/J (Pr) B 1 No. 2250/38 g., sgd. Keitel (29 Sept. 1938), BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 144, 82–7. On this see the comprehensive treatment by Jürgen Förster in the present volume.

<sup>82</sup> The relevant NSDAP work plans made no mention of the troops' welfare; see, for example, StdF, Abt.M, 'Aufgaben und Pflichten des Hoheitsträgers und Politischen Leiters im Kriege' [Tasks and duties of the bearer of sovereignty and political leader in the war] (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 9, and 'Anordnungen und Richtlinien für den Einsatz der Propaganda-dienststellen der NSDAP im Kriege' [Order and guidelines for the deployment of NSDAP propaganda offices in the war] (undated, c. June 1939), APO 250 I/347, 1–3, drafted by the Dept. M's representative in the Reich propaganda executive (*Reichspropagandaleitung*, RPL).

<sup>83</sup> Basic sources are Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 48–209, and Rass, 'Menschen-material', 227–330.

<sup>84</sup> Hess order 173/39 of 18 Sept. 1939, BA NS 6/329, 38–40, here 40. On implementation of this on the ground see LHA Koblenz, 662,3/159. During the Polish campaign there had been problems in supplying newspapers to troops at the front that the relevant OKW department for Wehrmacht propaganda (WPr) had been unable to get on top of; see report on deployment of Kompanie 621 and Propaganda-Staffel Ost in Poland (25 Jan. 1940), BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 186, 128–45, here 137–9. On Dept. WPr see Moll, *Abteilung Wehrmachtpropaganda*, 111–50, and the dissertation by Uziel, 'Wehrmacht, Propaganda Troops'. Both concentrate on 'active propaganda'.

<sup>85</sup> StA Augsburg, NSDAP-Kreisleitung Augsburg-Stadt 1/90–1.

with its staff during the war. The providing of 'comforts' for conscripted Party members however ran counter to paragraph 26 subparagraph 1 of the Defence Act of 21 May 1935, which laid down that membership of the NSDAP was to be suspended during the period of active service in the forces.<sup>86</sup> It consequently met with vehement objection from Generaloberst Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, commanding Army Group C, who asked the army's commander-in-chief Field-Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch to either forbid it or clarify the situation.<sup>87</sup> The clarification came at once. On 17 November 1939 the OKW and Hess staff agreed on the Party/Wehrmacht 'comradeship service', giving retrospective approval to the welfare for Party members in the Wehrmacht that was being provided by the *Hoheitsträger* at various levels.<sup>88</sup> There can of course be no suggestion that the Party was here managing to encroach on the internal competences of the Wehrmacht—quite the opposite; so long as the troops' commanders were themselves dealing with any welfare problems arising among their units the NSDAP did not even come into the picture. Bormann had to admit in mid-1942 that the comradeship service had been 'forgotten',<sup>89</sup> which does not say much for there being any very intensive cooperation between the Party and the Wehrmacht in caring for the troops' welfare.

A great deal more successful than the comradeship service was the 'comforts for the troops' which the Party promoted during the annual winter relief campaign (*Winterhilfswerk*, WHW).<sup>90</sup> At the instigation of Alfred Rosenberg, the Führer's plenipotentiary for the NSDAP's overall ideological training and education, it carried out in October 1939 for the first time a public collection of books for army hospitals, Wehrmacht transit camps, and field libraries.<sup>91</sup> The books were gathered in by cell and block leaders, checked at Kreis level for 'ideological suitability', and then sent to the Wehrmacht in packs of sixty.<sup>92</sup> The soldiers received from the Party the war and *Freikorps* stories

<sup>86</sup> RGBl. I, 1935, 609–14, here 613. On the interpretation of the Defence Act see *Recht der NSDAP*, 351–3, and Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 342–78.

<sup>87</sup> Leeb to Brauchitsch (20 Oct. 1939), BA-MA RH 14/44, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Bormann order 121/39 of 18 Nov. 1939, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 312–14. On the coming into being of this see Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 301 (27 Oct. 1939), and Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 172–3.

<sup>89</sup> Party chancellor, 'Confidential information' (V. I.) 45/599 of 25 June 1942, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 315–16. See Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 245–6, who overestimates the importance of the comradeship service.

<sup>90</sup> The WHW was a welfare organization geared to collecting donations of money and goods and making these available to the needy among the population. It served additionally as an instrument of racial discrimination, since Jews, 'asocial elements', and the 'racially inferior' were excluded from its ministrations. Carrying out the WHW campaigns was the work of the NSV; see Zimmermann, *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, 81–145; Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation*, 154–98, and Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 44–62.

<sup>91</sup> Hess order 185/39 of 7 Oct. 1939, BA NS 6/329, 55. On Rosenberg's role in providing comforts for the troops see Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg*, 140–2.

<sup>92</sup> On the carrying out of this and the later book collections as part of WHW activities in 1940/1 and 1941/2 see the appeal by GL Sudetenland 'Wir sammeln Bücher für unsere Soldaten', NS-Gaudienst Sudetenland (1939), 236, I; StadtA Duisburg, 102/602, and StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/89, and Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 171.

popular at the time, including works by Walter Flex, Hermann Löns, Werner Beumelburg, Ernst Jünger, and Ernst von Salomon.<sup>93</sup> Bormann and Rosenberg were keen 'to put good, ideologically impeccable literature in the hands of our soldiers'—a directive aimed at the attempts by the two churches to supply the troops with religious literature as well.<sup>94</sup> There had been besides complaints at the time from various Party offices that the churches' measures for troops' welfare were a great deal more efficient than the in comparison rudimentary efforts of the NSDAP.<sup>95</sup> Bormann went as far as calling for the complete closing down of the Wehrmacht chaplaincy during the war. He was however unable to force this through, since Hitler was a stubborn advocate of a 'truce' on religion during the war.<sup>96</sup> From its own perspective, therefore, there was nothing else the Party could do than step up its welfare for the troops if it did not want to lag behind the churches.

In its efforts to do so the Party leadership benefited from initiatives by local Party branches. At Christmas 1939/40 many of the *Ortsgruppen* took to sending the soldiers at the front parcels containing tobacco, sweets, clothing, and personal letters.<sup>97</sup> These 'gifts' now went not only to Party members, but to all male inhabitants of the *Ortsgruppe* who had been conscripted into the forces. Further, many of the Party's *Ortsgruppenleiter* wrote 'newsletters from home', keeping soldiers from their locality up to date with what was going on.<sup>98</sup> The Hess staff even took steps to standardize these poorly coordinated measures; a new agreement was reached with the OKW, and announced to the Party by Bormann on 24 February 1940. Under this, the 'command and welfare of members of the German Wehrmacht [were] wholly and solely a task of the relevant Wehrmacht agencies'. In future the Wehrmacht would always turn to the NSDAP for advice 'on all matters of welfare provided for the troops from home'.<sup>99</sup> The NSDAP's task was 'to spare German soldiers worries of all kinds by looking after their families at home, and by means of letters with news from their localities and by sending gifts to maintain the close bond between the homeland and the troops and thereby strengthen the German soldiers' fighting morale and willingness to serve'. Bormann ordered

<sup>93</sup> LHA Koblenz, 662, 3/45, 131–2.

<sup>94</sup> RS Bormann 236/39 of 14 Dec. 1939, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 308–9, here 308 (quotation), and the correspondence between Rosenberg and Bormann of January 1940, IMT, xxv. 202–6, doc. 100-PS and 101-PS.

<sup>95</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 214–15 (7 Oct. 1939); Leopold Gutterer to GL Robert Wagner (3 Nov. 1939), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiche 67399 [33074], and BA NS 18/647 and *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, iii. 597–8 (20 Dec. 1939). On the activities of the two churches see Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 276–305.

<sup>96</sup> Engel, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler*, 78–9 (4 Apr. 1940), here 78. On the Wehrmacht chaplaincy see BA-MA RH 15/273; Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 287–92; Güsgen, *Katholische Militärseelsorge*, and Beese, *Seelsorger*.

<sup>97</sup> StA Detmold, L 113/1036; *Kriegsmittelungen*, No. 2 (5 Dec. 1939); *Kriegspropaganda 1939–1941*, 229–30 (21 Nov. 1939), here 229, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 354–8.

<sup>98</sup> On the 'newsletter from home' see StA Detmold L 113/847, and *Kriegsmittelungen*, No. 1 (5 Nov. 1939).

<sup>99</sup> Bormann order 24/40 of 24 Feb. 1940, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 301–4, here 301 (quotation).

that the putting-together and dispatching of 'gift packages' to the troops was in future to be done by the local branches of the NSV.<sup>100</sup> In addition, there were detailed instructions as to what the content of the newsletters should be. The months that followed did in fact see a substantial systematizing of the NSDAP's troops welfare, since by and large the *Ortsgruppenleiter* carried out Bormann's orders.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from the Hess staff, Rosenberg's office, and the local organs of the NSDAP and NSV, there had since 1939/40 been a great many other Party bodies taking part in welfare for the troops; they included the Reich propaganda and Reich organizational directorates, as well as the DAF and its leisure time 'Strength through Joy' organization (*Kraft durch Freude*, KdF). These took part in troops' welfare from the end of October 1939, after it had evidently become clear to the OKW that it could not cater to the soldiers' free time and entertainment needs from its own resources, and it asked the Reich propaganda ministry (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, RMfVuP) for its support.<sup>102</sup> From that time on, requests from the troops at the front for newspapers and periodicals, books, radios, or entertainment in their free time were to be directed to the propaganda officer at the army high command, and those from occupation or home-based troops to the head of the relevant Reich propaganda office. In the propaganda ministry itself a special troops' welfare section was set up to deal with these requests; its staff included liaison officers from the main film office of the NSDAP Reich propaganda directorate and from the KdF.<sup>103</sup> The main film office supplied the troops with cinema films, which were paid for by the OKW.<sup>104</sup> The same applied to troops' welfare, which came under the responsibility of the KdF offices.<sup>105</sup> The KdF *Deutsches Volksbildungswerk* office organized lectures and poetry readings, concerts, opera performances, and sightseeing trips in the occupied countries. The

<sup>100</sup> In this the NSV not only drew on WHW collections, but also obtained special quotas of certain foodstuffs from the Reich ministry for food and agriculture; see Bormann circular of 5 Dec. 1940, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 107 00326 [14680], together with BA NS 19alt/192.

<sup>101</sup> This at any rate shows the form to be given to the 'newsletters'; see StA Detmold L 113/849; StadtA Duisburg, 102/599, and Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 176–83.

<sup>102</sup> This may be seen from an agreement between the RPL and ROL (undated, c. October 1939), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 66981 [33052], and BA NS 18/591, mentioned in Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 241; Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, vii. 165 (24 Oct. 1939), and a letter from WFA/WPr II b to OKH/OQu.IV Az z.b.V. (6 Nov. 1939), BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 144, 88.

<sup>103</sup> This was a very unusual arrangement, since it basically meant a government ministry coordinating the Party's troops' welfare activity. There were however many overlaps in the organization of offices in the RMfVuP and RPL, and in leading positions there were many people besides the minister Joseph Goebbels doing two or more jobs; see *Organisationsbuch*, 295–302a, and the editor's introduction to *Kriegspropaganda 1939–1941*, which however occasionally lacks the necessary selectivity. Daniel Mühlenfeld (Mülheim/Jena) is preparing a Ph.D. thesis on this topic.

<sup>104</sup> In the year 1940 as a whole this included 9,679 weekly newsreels, 3,334 loan copies of feature films, and 925 commercially acquired copies of feature films. Author's own figures, from lists in the RPL main film office (27 Oct. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiche 63806 [41746], and BA NS 18/356. The bulk of these films went to the occupation troops.

<sup>105</sup> On the structure of the KdF organization, which in many cases corresponded with the DAF and was therefore run mostly by DAF managers, see *Organisationsbuch*, 210–12.

leisure and sport offices took on the welfare of wounded soldiers and remedial gymnastics in Wehrmacht hospitals. According to an internal KdF report on activities, a total of 1,050,818 soldiers attended 2,423 troops' welfare events in the year 1940.<sup>106</sup> On the basis that in early 1941 there were 6 million men in uniform,<sup>107</sup> this means that one soldier in six had been to an event organized by the KdF. Welfare provided in the military hospitals by the KdF represents a further, genuinely military field of activity in which the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations were more heavily involved from 1939/40—social and welfare maintenance to the Wehrmacht. This includes the wide range of measures undertaken for the benefit of members of the Wehrmacht and their dependants where there was personal injury, soldiers had been killed in action, or officers and soldiers had been discharged from the Wehrmacht.<sup>108</sup> The basis for the provision of welfare to the military was the 'Wehrmacht Welfare and Maintenance Act' (*Wehrmachtfürsorge- und Versorgungsgesetz*, WFVG) of 26 August 1938.<sup>109</sup> This laid down the cases in which soldiers, Wehrmacht employees, and their dependants were entitled to welfare and maintenance, and what kinds of these could be claimed. The WFVG, which was tailored to peacetime circumstances, was soon replaced by two further laws to take account of the special circumstances of soldiers' wartime service. The 'Active Service Welfare and Maintenance Act' (*Einsatzfürsorge- und Versorgungsgesetz*, EWFVG) enacted on 6 July 1939 governed welfare and maintenance for soldiers wounded on war service, and allowances for the families of those killed.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the scope of the WFVG was further extended by the 'Order on Compensation for Personal Injuries' (*Personenschädenverordnung*) of 1 September 1939 to civilians who 'following an attack on Reich territory or a particular use of armed force' had sustained physical injury.<sup>111</sup> Both these acts prescribed only new welfare and support measures for special circumstances.

All applications for support were examined by Wehrmacht welfare and maintenance offices (*Wehrmachtfürsorge- und Versorgungsämter*, WFVA), located in the same town as the military district headquarters.<sup>112</sup> The whole corpus of

<sup>106</sup> See the list in IFZ, MA 737, and Buchholz, 'Kraft durch Freude', 308–21.

<sup>107</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 980.

<sup>108</sup> This is distinct from state family aid, the maintenance payments made to the families of soldiers on active service. These were dispensed by the domestic administration authorities, see Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*.

<sup>109</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1938, 1077–112. On the passing of the WFVG see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 22410–15 [12057], and BA R 43 II/1279 a–b. There has so far been no research done into the provision of welfare and maintenance to the Wehrmacht. Where the Weimar Republic is concerned Voss, 'Das neue Haus', 157–78, has shown that the Reichswehr's welfare provisions played a central role in the military socialization of its soldiers.

<sup>110</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1939, 1217–23. On this see commentary to the welfare and support act, 350–80, and the mention in Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 362–3.

<sup>111</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1939, 1623–5 (quoted from § 1, para. 1), and Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 47.

<sup>112</sup> *Fürsorge- und Versorgungsgesetz*, 524–39, app. 32. On the institutional development of welfare and maintenance provisions see the talk by the head of section 3 in WVFA Nürnberg (6 Jan. 1941), BA-MA RW 16/228; surveys in KTB OKW, i. 903, and data in Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv. 350–1.



laws relating to Wehrmacht welfare and maintenance, as it had been drafted at the start of the war, is marked by the fact that the NSDAP had no right of any kind to involvement in this field of policy. The Wehrmacht set great store on remaining independent of the Party on welfare and maintenance matters; from the OKW's viewpoint it was already intolerable that on these issues there had, because the relevant laws and implementing rules for WFVG and EWFVG all without exception came under 'Reich maintenance' (*Reichsversorgung*), to be cooperation with the Reich labour and finance ministries. Immediately after war began the Hess staff and OKW surprisingly came to an agreement to use the NSDAP main office for war victims and the NSKOV for 'caring for those injured and bereaved' by the present war.<sup>113</sup> This necessitated a change in the relevant laws on welfare and maintenance in which, since their involvement in wartime had not originally been envisaged, there was no mention at all of these Party offices.<sup>114</sup> In the interim the NSKOV played a part in welfare and maintenance activities by advising injured soldiers or their dependants on filling in the relevant claim forms.<sup>115</sup> August 1940 finally saw the amendment to the law, with the tasks of the NSKOV in military welfare and maintenance set out in paragraphs 143, 144, and 176 of the WFVG.<sup>116</sup> Now, its members could officially act as advisers in this field. Good use seems to have been made of the NSKOV advice centres, although internally there were often complaints about not having a high enough public profile.<sup>117</sup> In the following months local NSKOV offices made a great many calls on the Hess staff to make changes to the WFVG so that hardship cases among those entitled to welfare might be better served.<sup>118</sup> The Party's Reich executive nonetheless regarded the NSKOV as of minor importance, since shortly before the attack on the Soviet Union thought was being given to shutting down its activities.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Bormann order 166/39 of 11 Sept. 1939, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 425, and Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv. 284–5. The NSKOV work plan of June 1939 had still stated that 'more detailed instructions on the care of those injured in the coming war will be issued at the appropriate time'; see StdF, Abt. M, 'Anweisungen für den Einsatz der NSKOV im Kriege' (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 38.

<sup>114</sup> On the NSKOV organizational set-up see an application from the Reich war-victims leader (*Reichskriegsopferführer*) Hanns Oberlindober for the continuance of his agency (7 May 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 01513–15 [24685], and BA NS 22/305; *Organisationsbuch*, 239–42, and Diehl, 'Victims', 731–3.

<sup>115</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, iv. 1274–92, here 1291–2 (20 June 1940). On NSKOV advice centres in the *Ortsgruppen* see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/127; StadtA Düsseldorf, Abt. IV/970, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 358–9.

<sup>116</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1940, 1162–6, here 1164–5, and BA-MA RW 16/97. The analogous amendments to the EWFVG did not follow until summer 1942; *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 72103–4 [42959], and BA NS 18/749.

<sup>117</sup> RS NSKOV-Gau office head Moselland on 22 Feb. 1941, in *Die Partei hört mit*, ii. 11–13.

<sup>118</sup> Bormann announcement of 18 Jan. 1941, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 107 00293–4, and BA NS 19alt/192.

<sup>119</sup> This is evident from a memorandum by Oberlindober (14 May 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 05191–204 [25601], and BA NS 22/742, and from a letter from Ley to Bormann (1 July 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 08288–92 [25563], and BA NS 22/976.



This did not however happen, because during the eastern campaign there was more and more call on the NSKOV's services.

A further area in which the Party's head office for war victims and the NSKOV played a part in Wehrmacht welfare was in the military hospitals. This activity was based on an agreement between the deputy Führer and the OKW of 4 December 1939 under which the Kreisleiters were to appoint representatives who would be available to the medical superintendents of the hospitals for advice.<sup>120</sup> These representatives had to organize the cultural side of welfare for those in hospital, and to act as a link between the wounded and their families. In reality this meant that all local Party agencies were involved. The *Hoheitsträger* visited the wounded to reinforce their 'soldierly attitude', the NSKOV looked after giving welfare advice, the NSV provided sparkling wine, orange juice, and cigarettes, and the KdF entertained them with variety shows and concerts.<sup>121</sup> An important duty fell to the local NSF and BDM, who helped cheer up the mainly male patients.<sup>122</sup> In order that this should not lead to sexual contacts, members of the BDM when visiting hospitals had to stay in groups.

The steps taken by the NSDAP in troops' welfare and maintenance to the Wehrmacht had a twofold purpose. On the one hand it wanted, in line with its claim to sole charge of people management, not to leave the care of soldiers simply to the Wehrmacht. Since at this time the Wehrmacht still had autonomy over matters within its services, the Party organized the link between home and front, seeking to make the mutual contacts its monopoly. On the other it also aimed at intensifying the ideological indoctrination of the troops. This, at all events, lay behind the work agreement that Rosenberg concluded with the chief of the OKW on 9 November 1940.<sup>123</sup> *Innere Formierung*, whether as part of 'protection of youth' or troop welfare, served primarily to relieve the soldiers engaged in the fighting of worrying about those at home, and to spur them on to maximum effort. From the mental perspective of the Nazi regime, constantly marked as it was by the 'stab in the back' legend, mobilizing the troops and marshalling society at home was a crucial condition for achieving military success. The taking over by the Party of tasks in seeing to caring for the troops was a process that went on in agreement with the OKW. The latter

<sup>120</sup> Extracts repr. in Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 285. The KLs also helped with the taking over of premises to set up new military hospitals, by reporting to the Gauleiters buildings suitable for this; see HStA Düsseldorf, Regierung Düsseldorf/54469; *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 107 00749–54 [15586], and BA NS 19alt/229. On this see Süß, *Volkskörper*, 188–91.

<sup>121</sup> On military hospital welfare by the NSDAP see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/8563; StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/632; *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 124 04875–6. [14488], and BA NS 10/512 and Hess order 79/40 of 23 Aug. 1940, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 330–1.

<sup>122</sup> StdF, V. I. 5/41 of 30 Jan. 1941, in *Verfügungen*, iii. 331, and an undated report from the NSF department head in Kreis Trier, repr. in *Die Partei hört mit*, ii. 45–60, here 59.

<sup>123</sup> The 'work agreement' provided that Rosenberg's services should provide the Wehrmacht with the material for ideological education and morale support. It is repr. in Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 247. *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 02488–93, 561–6, 579–83 [24382], and BA NS 8/184.

had an interest in taking this load off the shoulders of the military services, so that they could concentrate fully on the job of fighting the war;<sup>124</sup> so from September 1939 onwards the relationship between Party and Wehrmacht had come to include an institutional division of tasks.<sup>125</sup> The Party was not, at that time, in any way trying to undermine the Wehrmacht.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> A like view from Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 167, 175, and Roth, *Parteikreis*, 307–11.

<sup>125</sup> On this process see Nolzen, *Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation*, 93–4.

<sup>126</sup> See, contra, the earlier interpretation of the situation in Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 480–91.

### III. 'People Management' on the Home Front, May 1941 to July 1943

#### I. NSDAP CELEBRATIONS AND 'ACTIVATING THE PARTY'

ON 10 May 1941 the NSDAP suddenly found itself confronted with the greatest fiasco it had ever suffered; on that day Rudolf Hess flew to Scotland to present the British war cabinet with proposals for making a separate peace, and thus meeting the call the Führer had made in his propaganda for reaching a peace 'settlement' with Britain. Although the actual circumstances surrounding this flight are shrouded in mystery to this day, it may be assumed with a probability bordering on certainty that Hitler was not privy to it. Hess was seeking to forge links with members of the British nobility, and thereby help bring the war with the British Empire to an end before the German attack on the Soviet Union began.<sup>1</sup> The first contacts he had after capture with representatives of the British government however showed at once how naive this calculation had been. Without any official mandate, which was just what Hess was unable to show, his initiative was doomed to failure.

Hitler, who in the morning of 11 May 1941, on the Obersalzberg in Berchtesgaden, was given the for him shattering news of what his deputy had done on his own initiative, was furious. After lengthy consultation with his closest confidants, including Bormann, he decided to announce that Hess was mentally ill.<sup>2</sup> Where the Party was concerned, Hitler ordered on 12 May 1941 that 'the previous office of the deputy Führer is to be known henceforth as the Party chancellery. It is under my personal control. Its head is, as before, *Parteigenosse* Reichsleiter Martin Bormann.'<sup>3</sup> This provision formed the basis for Bormann establishing himself as the new head of the NSDAP.<sup>4</sup> In essence, the previous office of the deputy Führer now continued with its operations, renamed as the Party chancellery (*Partei-Kanzlei*, PK) and thus ensuring continuity within the Party. Among the German public, however, the flight of the Führer's deputy caused unparalleled dismay, which spread particularly among the members of the Party and political leaders. Most situation reports from the NSDAP Kreise spoke of a mood of deep depression, for Hess had been very popular among the Party's members.<sup>5</sup> Bormann consequently ensured

<sup>1</sup> On the causes for, circumstances surrounding, and outcome of Hess's flight, see Schmidt, *Rudolf Heß*, 91–171, and Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß*, 261–83.

<sup>2</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1714. On how the Nazi regime's propaganda dealt with Hess's flight see Nolzen, 'Der Heß-Flug', 130–56.

<sup>3</sup> In *Verfügungen*, i. 4, published in German newspapers on 14 May 1941 alongside an article headlined 'The Hess case cleared up'.

<sup>4</sup> Covered comprehensively in Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 150–83.

<sup>5</sup> Report from KL Kitzingen to Stv.GL in Gau Mainfranken (16 May 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 541 0006–7 [14999], and StA Würzburg, NSDAP-Gauleitung Mainfranken

that immediately after 12 May 1941 the portraits of the deputy Führer that hung in all Party offices (including those of more than 30,000 local branches) were removed.<sup>6</sup> A certain degree of calm was already reached in the Party with the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, which resulted in the Hess affair being quickly forgotten.<sup>7</sup>

After Hess's flight, further means were however needed to remotivate the Party cadres to devote their energies to the NSDAP. One tool that the Party leadership had always used since the 'old days of struggle' (*Kampfzeit*) to mobilize people inside the Party was the National Socialist celebration days. In the Third Reich these formed a central element in the Party's propaganda effort. Among the events celebrated by the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations were 30 January as the 'day of taking power', 24 February as that of the Party's foundation, 'heroes' day' on 16 March, youth commitment day (the celebration of 14-year-old boys and girls joining the Hitler Youth) in late March/early April, Hitler's birthday on 20 April, 1 May as 'labour day', mothers' day on the second Sunday in May, the 'movement's day' commemorating the failed putsch of 1923 in Munich on 9 November, and the Christmas holidays.<sup>8</sup> On top of these came a host of 'life celebrations'—of births, deaths, and marriages—and a great many Reich, Gau, and Kreis Party celebrations and other gatherings. Up to now these Party festivities have been studied from the viewpoint of how far they drew the German population into their orbit; the NSDAP's celebrations however also had an importance among the ranks of its own office-holders. The aim was to integrate members of the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations within their respective organizations by giving them, via a wide variety of commemorative events, a special sense of belonging.<sup>9</sup> With its special celebrations the Party was pursuing its express aim of imbuing its members with the content of Nazi ideology.

After the flight by Hess on 10 May 1941 the first step the head of the Party chancellery took was to reorganize the calendar of NSDAP celebrations. In a circular dated 29 May 1941 Bormann complained that there was, 'among many Party comrades not confirmed in their ideological thinking, still a desperate urge to create in the National Socialist days of commemoration a substitute for religious festivals'. All trace of the 'mystic and cultic' must however be kept apart from the National Socialist celebrations, since these

I/3. On the public mood in Greater Germany see *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vii. 2302 (15 May 1941), together with extract from a report from the chief administrative officer for the Ebermannstadt region (31 May 1941), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, i. 148–9. Fully in Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 166–7.

<sup>6</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 00548–9 [15068], see BA R 43 II/139 a, and Lang, *Bormann*, 159–61. On the Hess portrait see Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 74 n. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Situation report by the Gendarmerie post in Unckenheim in Kreis Mainz (23 June 1941), LHA Koblenz 662.5/19, and Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 193–5.

<sup>8</sup> On National Socialist holidays see Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation*, and Reichel, *Der schöne Schein* (1993).

<sup>9</sup> Developed by Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden*, 160–93; Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde*, 100–35, 560–3, and Rösch, *Die Münchner NSDAP*, 150–65, 291–305.

served only the purpose of 'building political will' among the Party members and *Volksgenossen*.<sup>10</sup> He tasked the main training office (*Hauptschulungsamt*, HSchA), a department of the Party's Reich organization executive, with putting this principle into effect in the various Party celebrations.<sup>11</sup> The main training office thereupon went about remodelling the festivities in the local branches.<sup>12</sup> At the same time the Reich propaganda leadership began to step up the NSDAP's 'cultural work', and formed the main cultural affairs office (*Hauptkulturamt*, HKultA) so as to bring the 'cultural activities' of the Party, its divisions, and affiliated organizations under one roof.<sup>13</sup> The prime task for the main cultural affairs office was to vitalize village culture, and with it to intensify propaganda activities in the countryside. 'Music, song, village theatre, folk-dancing, national costume, shooting, folk art, and so on' were under the guidance of the Party to 'reawaken a lively and traditional way of life'.<sup>14</sup> The importance for the Party cadres of this revival of village culture lay less in the spreading of Nazi ideology among country-dwelling Party members than in bringing it home to the Party in country areas that it had most of all to undertake 'folk culture' work.<sup>15</sup> Up to that time this had been left almost entirely to the Reich Food Estate (*Reichsnährstand*, RNSSt).

As the war went on the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations also took more to commemorating the dead. As early as August 1940 Goebbels, at the head of the Party's Reich propaganda, had introduced events to honour the country's heroes, as he feared that the Catholic and Protestant churches would between them be able to marginalize the NSDAP in caring for the dependants.<sup>16</sup> These events took place in 1940/1 in local branches where fallen soldiers had lived, and were presented as a central event remembering

<sup>10</sup> In *Verfügungen*, i. 105–6 (quotation).

<sup>11</sup> Bormann to Friedrich Schmidt, head of the HSchA in the ROL (10 June 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 04639–42 [25548], and BA NS 22/714. This led to an argument as to which Party office was responsible for organizing the NSDAP celebrations. This conflict, involving the ROL, Rosenberg's office, and the RPL, was largely defused by Bormann's order 25/42 of 23 May 1942, in *Verfügungen*, i. 108–12. On this see Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg*, 109–12.

<sup>12</sup> See the unsigned and undated report on the workshop in the HSchA from 13–26 June 1941, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 00098–122 [25594], together with BA NS 22/29 and StadtA Dortmund, 424/13. The HSchA was responsible for the coaching the PLs in the local branches, that is to say for their training at Party schools, ideological indoctrination through lectures, and commemorative events; see Eitze, *Vom Wesen*, 43–83, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 177–228.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Cerff, head of the HKultA in the RPL, special circular No. 1 (10 Sept. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 00407–8 [25548], with BA NS 22/138, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 52 (11 July 1941).

<sup>14</sup> Bormann order 40/41 of 31 Aug. 1941, in *Verfügungen*, i. 505–7, here 507 (quotations). *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 00430–35 [25294], and BA NS 22/138.

<sup>15</sup> Bormann announcement 16/42 of 24 Dec. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, i. 189–97, in which he in a letter to a fictitious OL stresses the need for 'folk-culture work', together with *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 71083–90 [44190], and BA NS 18alt/709.

<sup>16</sup> Goebbels to the Party's Gau heads of propaganda (*Gaupropagandaleiter*, GPL) (13 Aug. 1940), *Akten deutscher Bischöfe*, v. 1003–4. On the NSDAP heroes' days in general see Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden*, 494–502.

all the dead.<sup>17</sup> They seem however to have found little resonance among the population, because the Party lacked suitable premises for holding the events, as well as speakers trained in delivering funeral orations.<sup>18</sup> In May 1941 the Reich propaganda leadership tried to systematize the heroes' remembrance events, and in this connection issued guidance on ceremonies to mourn air-raid victims.<sup>19</sup> From that time on ceremonies honouring fallen heroes always followed the same pattern; they began with a piece of solemn music played by the music platoons of the Hitler Youth or other Party divisions or affiliated organizations, after which the local *Hoheitsträger*—usually the Kreis or local branch leader—read out 'words from the Führer'. Relatives of the deceased then read patriotic poems. After a song sung by the entire assembly came the funeral speech by the *Hoheitsträger*, in which he stressed the need for personal sacrifice. Finally those present signed the local branch's book of condolences, or offered their condolences personally to the deceased's family.<sup>20</sup> Remembrance ceremonies for air-raid victims differed in that the deceased were laid out on a bier in the meeting venue, and interred after the *Hoheitsträger*'s speech.<sup>21</sup> The funeral service itself was conducted by a clergyman.<sup>22</sup> In the years that followed, remembrance services for fallen soldiers, like those for air-raid victims, came in many places to represent an important task for the NSDAP. Leading figures in the Party complained that the Catholic Church in particular was becoming competition for the NSDAP,<sup>23</sup> though the Protestant Church, too, was able in pastoral care to win back ground.<sup>24</sup> In both Protestant and Catholic areas political leaders and Party members themselves took part in church burials and other church ceremonies.<sup>25</sup> The Party chancellery and Reich propaganda leadership therefore tried to enhance the NSDAP's heroes' remembrance ceremonies by giving the *Hoheitsträger* better preparation for the task. They were moreover to form official delegations from members of the Party and its divisions and organizations, so that the Party was

<sup>17</sup> Detailed guidelines for these events are to be found in *Die Neue Gemeinschaft*, 6 (1940) 44, 1–44. The events honouring the fallen are not to be confused with the NSDAP remembrance days for Party members; see IfZ, MA 125–9, and StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/72.

<sup>18</sup> See *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, viii. 2884–9 (20 Oct. 1941), relating to the time of the attack on the Soviet Union.

<sup>19</sup> Administrative communication from the Gau treasurer of NSDAP Kurhessen (25 Aug. 1941), YVA, JM 4169, and PK, V. I. 54/612 of 5 Nov. 1941, in *Verfügungen*, i. 178–9.

<sup>20</sup> This standardized sequence can be gleaned from documents in PK, V. I. 18/231 of 4 Mar. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, i. 179; *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, x. 3830–2 (15 June 1942), and *Die Neue Gemeinschaft*, 10 (1944) 4/5, 237–49.

<sup>21</sup> See StadtA Dortmund, 424/92, and StadtA Duisburg, 607/164.

<sup>22</sup> As an example of a funeral of air-raid victims on 18 Feb. 1942 see StadtA Essen, Rep. 102/1131. On the air raids on Essen Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 92–105.

<sup>23</sup> Report by GPL Bayreuth for October 1942, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiche 59647 [43306], and BA NS 18/149. In general Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 361–4.

<sup>24</sup> So far there has been no systematic study of the relationship between Protestantism and the NSDAP in the Second World War. A basic source in respect of Berlin is Gailus, *Protestantismus*.

<sup>25</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xi. 4311–13 (12 Oct. 1942), and report from the SD detachment in Linz (5 June 1943), BA NS 6/409, 145–69, here 155–7.



represented at remembrance events as discrete groups. Rules on the provision of delegations from the Wehrmacht and German Red Cross to attend the ceremonies were also laid down in detail.<sup>26</sup> The main training office and main cultural office even held a workshop at which the Kreis leaders attending were taught about NSDAP 'wartime arranging of ceremonies'.<sup>27</sup> For Bormann, Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Ley the National Socialist ceremonies were an effective means of combating the churches during the war. People management (*Menschenführung*) on the home front, as practised by the NSDAP from 1941/2, can be properly explained only against the background of the anti-religious conspiracy theories of these high Party officials.

While the NSDAP battled against religious pastoral care on the home front, the Nazi regime attempted, via the Führer decree of 13 January 1943 on the 'comprehensive deployment of men and women on the tasks of defending the Reich', to improve the situation where replacements for the Wehrmacht were concerned, and to shift labour resources from peacetime production into making armaments.<sup>28</sup> It would be for the head of the Party chancellery 'to release all staff not employed on tasks important to the war effort' within the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations, and then transfer them to the Wehrmacht, the armaments industry, or employment regarded as essential to the war effort.<sup>29</sup> Bormann and the Party chancellery were thus to embark on close-downs (*Stilllegungen*) within the NSDAP. Because the OKW thereupon asked to be told of the number of Party employees, Bormann began by finding out what the staffing situation within the Party was; from one internal report he could see that the number of full-time staff working in the NSDAP had by this time shrunk to less than half the peacetime complement.<sup>30</sup> He therefore decided to follow a twofold strategy: on the one hand he made preparations for redundancies in the Party organization, while on the other making it plain that after these the Party would be unable to give up any more staff.<sup>31</sup>

The first in line for suffering the shutdowns within the Party was Rosenberg, in whose area of responsibility the Party chancellery was looking to close down

<sup>26</sup> On this see Bormann circular 6/43 of 12 Jan. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 61–2, and PK, V. I. 16/196 of 13 Apr. 1943, *ibid.* 60–1.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from HSchA to HKultA (9 Jan. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 117 07826 [26953], and BA NS 22/879.

<sup>28</sup> *Führer-Erlasse*, 311–13. On the enactment of this decree see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 09567–98 [16437], and BA R 43 II/655 and Rebentisch, *Führerstaat*, 475–7. The aim was to make 800,000 fresh men available to the Wehrmacht; see Chef OKW/AHA/E No. 4/43 g. (18 Jan. 1943), BA NS 6/317, 94–100. A detailed interpretation of the military replacement situation can be found in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 971–86.

<sup>29</sup> This clause had been negotiated by Gerhard Klopfer, StS in the PK, as a major item in the discussions with the Reich chancellery on the Führer decree of 13 Jan. 1943; see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 09578–82 [16437], and BA R 43 II/655.

<sup>30</sup> Paper by Zander (25 Jan. 1943), BA NS 6/317, 103. The survey was as at 31 Aug. 1942.

<sup>31</sup> Bormann order 3/43 of 25 Jan. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 67; Bormann to Keitel, copied to Lammers for information (27 Jan. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 10794–6 [16521], and BA R 43 II/663; Lammers's minute of the same date, *ibid.* 101 10793, and Bormann's paper for Hitler (13 Feb. 1943), BA NS 6/317, 123–5.



his office for domestic affairs and call a halt to preparing the 'Hohe Schule' (a university-like institution for National Socialist research and education).<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly Rosenberg objected to the measures Bormann was planning on the ground that he could see little sense in them since the number of staff they would save would be negligible.<sup>33</sup> Bormann cabled back angrily that it was not how many employees would be 'released' by the closure measures that was decisive, but 'that all Party offices not important to the war effort should be completely closed down, even if this did not result in a numerically impressive number of posts being saved'.<sup>34</sup> Bormann however categorically ruled out any redundancies in the Party's Reich executive offices or in the Gau and Kreis staffs.<sup>35</sup> Instead, he concentrated on the NSDAP's divisions and affiliated organizations, in which he had identified a number of fields of activity that were not 'important to the war effort' (*kriegswichtig*). He ordered, one after another, the end of maintaining card indexes of members and subscriptions by the NSKOV, the Reich League for the German Family, the NSV, the NSDÄB (the doctors' organization), and the NSF.<sup>36</sup> Details of full-time staff 'released' from the main offices of the Party's Reich executive board were to be reported to the Reich Treasurer's office and Party chancellery by the division or affiliated organization leader concerned, while reporting those released in the Gaue and Kreise was for the relevant Gauleiter.

Next, Bormann ordered the closing down of the RDB (the civil servants' organization), the Reich colonial league, and the NSLB (the teachers' organization), together with their Gau and Kreis offices.<sup>37</sup> The closing down of the main office for educationalists and the NSLB met with vehement protest from Fritz Wächtler, the head of these. He complained that the NSLB was in fact carrying out several tasks of importance for the war, which made it unacceptable to close this office for the duration.<sup>38</sup> The Party chancellery

<sup>32</sup> Bormann to Rosenberg (26 Jan. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 126 03528 [27014], and BA NS 8/188. On Bormann's closures within the Party after 13 Jan. 1943 see Schmier, 'Martin Bormann', 255–66; Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 460–1, and Longerich, *Hitlers Stellvertreter*, 191–3.

<sup>33</sup> Telex Rosenberg to Bormann (30 Jan. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 03481–3 [27014], and BA NS 8/188, and *ibid.* 126 04837–45. On this see Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg*, 144–5.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from Bormann to Rosenberg (30 Jan. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 03473–6 [27014], and BA NS 8/188. Rosenberg finally had to give way to the head of the Party chancellery; see the minutes of discussions by Werner Köppen, Rosenberg's personal adjutant (26 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 00145–7 [27171], and BA NS 8/131.

<sup>35</sup> Bormann circular 24/43 of 12 Feb. 1943, BA NS 6/167, 53–4.

<sup>36</sup> Bormann orders 6/43 of 19 Feb. 1943, 7/43 of 17 Feb. 1943, 12/43 of 27 Feb. 1943, 13/42 of 27 Feb. 1943, and 22/43 of 22 Mar. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv, 321, 374, 393, 387, 252–3. On closures in the NSKOV see Bormann to Oberlindober (26 Jan. 1943), BA Sammlung Schumacher, 255. On the Reich League for the German Family see Stephenson, 'Reichsbund'.

<sup>37</sup> Bormann order 8/43 of 17 Feb. 1943, 9/43 of 17 Feb. 1943, 10/43 of 18 Feb. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv, 325–6, 360–1, 324–5. On the closure of the NSLB see BA NS 12/645, and Feiten, *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund*, 197–200.

<sup>38</sup> Wächtler to Bormann (17 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 04935–41 [27167], and BA NS 22/737. Similar criticism in Rosenberg to Bormann (8 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 03434–5 [27098], and BA NS 8/188.

head was unimpressed, but came to an agreement with Ley that the Reich organization executive should take over the training of the teachers, which had hitherto come under the NSLB.<sup>39</sup> Further closures affected the German Red Cross, the Reich Veterans' League (*NS-Reichskriegerbund*, NSRKB), and the People's League for Germans Abroad which were both 'supervised organizations' of the Party.<sup>40</sup> There were also 'simplifications' in the Reich League of Legal Officials (*NS-Rechtswahrerbund*, NSRB) and the University Teachers' League (*NS-Dozentenbund*, NSDozB).<sup>41</sup> It is surprising that Bormann and the Party chancellery made no cuts in the Party's largest organization, the DAF. Bormann allowed Ley to deal himself with simplifying its services, merely reminding him that staff released as a result had to be notified to the Party chancellery.<sup>42</sup> The same occurred with the Hitler Youth, where the Reich youth leadership was to decide on all redundancies.<sup>43</sup> Looking at the closing-down of offices within the Party in the spring of 1943, it is striking how the relatively large amount of effort exerted is in contrast to the actual mobilization of manpower resources from the Party ranks for the Wehrmacht and armaments industry. Bormann had anyway expected from the outset to free only something like 2,000 male and 5,000 female NSDAP staff for other duties.<sup>44</sup> The actual number will have been substantially smaller, since many Gauleiters tended to take the employees who had been released onto their own staffs. The redundancies carried out by the head of the Party chancellery were purely cosmetic measures, intended primarily to demonstrate to the public that in the struggle for final victory the Party was giving up its own people to the Wehrmacht and war industry.<sup>45</sup> For swelling the Wehrmacht's ranks the number of NSDAP staff made available was quite insignificant. On 4 December 1942 in Greater Germany a total of 5,278,970 men born 1897–1925 were in reserved occupations. Of these, 12,441 were working full-time in the offices of the NSDAP—that is to say just 0.24 per cent. The whole available full-time personnel of the NSDAP represented, at 42,797 men, only

<sup>39</sup> ROL order 4/43 of 28 Apr. 1943, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 16118–19 [27260], and BA R 2/22329. On this see König, 'Erziehung', 156–8.

<sup>40</sup> Wächtler to Bormann (17 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 04935–41 [27167], and BA NS 22/737. Similar criticism in Rosenberg to Bormann (8 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 03434–5 [27098], and BA NS 8/188.

<sup>41</sup> Bormann orders 30/43 of 7 May 1943, 45/43 of 18 July 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 265, 300. On the NSRB see Sunnus, *NS-Rechtswahrerbund*, 133–4.

<sup>42</sup> On close-downs in the DAF see Ley order 4/43 of 3 Feb. 1943, *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt*, 9 (1943) 1, 8–11, with centralizing measures in the DAF central office, and Ley order 10/43 of 27 Feb. 1943, *ibid.* 9 (1943) 2, 28–30, with the restructuring of Gau administrations. The measures in the DAF are summarized in PK, V. I. 14/172 of 3 Apr. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 266–76. On the reporting of manpower losses in the DAF, Bormann to Ley (11 Feb. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 117 04501 [27069], and BA NS 22/714.

<sup>43</sup> Bormann announcement 7/43 of 10 Feb. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 236–9.

<sup>44</sup> Briefing paper by Bormann for Hitler (13 Feb. 1943), BA NS 6/317, 123–5, here 125.

<sup>45</sup> Goebbels was nonetheless impressed, and noted in his diary that 'the Party, too, has shut down a whole range of organizations and associations. Bormann is being quite tough about this. In the overall conduct of the war there are few problems to be expected from him ...'; Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vii. 550 (14 Mar. 1943).

a quarter of the number classified as in reserved occupations for the purposes of the Organisation Todt.<sup>46</sup>

The redundancies within the Party after 13 January 1943 are in the in-house jargon of those weeks and months referred to as part of the 'activation of the Party'.<sup>47</sup> This term however came into use only retrospectively, and actually related to the wave of mobilization within the Party after the Sixth Army's surrender at Stalingrad on 1 February 1943. Only a day earlier the NSDAP had been fêting the tenth anniversary of Hitler's seizure of power, as if the military situation on the eastern front was not making an absurdity of such celebrations.<sup>48</sup> Once the German public had, over the following weeks, become more and more aware of the extent of the disaster, there was an unprecedented crisis of confidence.<sup>49</sup> Even the members of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations were badly shaken by the turn of events. The Party chancellery and the Reich propaganda leadership however took immediate countermeasures so that activism among Party members and political leaders should not flag further still. On 17 February 1943 Bormann ordered that evening meetings for Party members should be reintroduced as 'one of the means of providing guidance and education that proved its worth in the "days of struggle"'.<sup>50</sup> These evenings were meetings in the Party's local branches or cells, restricted to Party members. The evenings, as Bormann envisaged them, had a dual aim: first, Party members were to be enabled 'when in conversation with the *Volksgenossen* to talk about and answer the most important and burning questions of the day'. And secondly they would increase 'general awareness of the demands of a total war'. The evenings served, as Ley and Goebbels put it, to 'activate the Party'.<sup>51</sup> The discussion evenings the NSDAP organized over the following months formed an integral part of the training—or, as it was termed at the time, orientation—of the Party members. It was natural, therefore, that the Reich propaganda leadership and the main training office were involved in preparing the campaign; over the following weeks a process for sharing tasks in running the meetings was worked out. The Reich propaganda leadership authorities provided those who would give the talks at the meetings with 'speaker's material'.<sup>52</sup> The main training office

<sup>46</sup> See the schedules in BA NS 6/317, 29 (as at 1 Aug. 1942, though only for those born 1900–25), and in Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*, 477 (as at 4 Dec. 1942).

<sup>47</sup> See the undated and unsigned list, BA NS 6/793, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Programme of KL Münster-Warendorf (21 Jan. 1943), StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/105, and *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xi. 4732–3 (1 Feb. 1943). Several Gaue reported large crowds and 'unprecedented numbers attending'; see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 77067–71 [43883], and BA NS 18/869.

<sup>49</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 189–98.

<sup>50</sup> Bormann order 5/42 of 17 Feb. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 24–6. On implementation in the Gaue see the undated circular from GL Magdeburg-Anhalt, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 04651–2 [27090]. On NSDAP discussion evenings prior to 1933 see Rösch, *Münchener NSDAP*, 145–6, 151–2, 208–9.

<sup>51</sup> On this expression, whose creator is not known, see an undated speech by Ley (c. March 1943), BA NS 6/793, 48–73, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 75 (10 July 1943).

<sup>52</sup> RPL, Hauptamt Propaganda, Amt Rednerwesen, 'Der Sprechabend der Partei!' (23 Mar. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 64698–704 [43949], and BA NS 18/409.

developed information booklets that were discussed during the evenings, and supplied 'training leaders' for local events.<sup>53</sup> The *Hoheitsträger* coordinated the activation of the Party, and reported on this to the Party chancellery. If one believes their reports, the evening meetings were a great success. The Gaue of Halle-Mersburg and Bayerische Ostmark spoke of well-attended meetings and lively discussion among the Party comrades.<sup>54</sup> Only the situation report from the deputy Gauleiter of Baden struck a more critical note, complaining of the 'unfruitful discussions' that had gone on at the evening meetings.<sup>55</sup> Overall, however, the Party chancellery was satisfied with this activation of the Party. Accordingly Hellmuth Friedrichs, head of the department for Party matters at the Party chancellery, emphasized in a speech to the Reichleiters and Gauleiters that the discussion evenings had put in the hands of those running the cells and blocks the tools they needed for their job. The aim of an 'orientation' of these officials had thus been achieved.<sup>56</sup>

## 2. RACISM AND REPRESSION: THE PARTY, FOREIGN WORKERS, AND THE GERMAN POPULATION

The use of foreign manpower, as this developed in Germany during the Second World War, was in basic conflict with Nazi ideology. As far back as the NSDAP's 'immediate economic programme' of 1932 it had been said that 'if we wish to put into practice the right of our national comrades to work, we must prevent non-Germans from taking their jobs away from them'.<sup>57</sup> There had been since 1933 not the slightest change in the NSDAP's rejection of employing foreign workers. This showed the fundamentally racist character of the National Socialist movement; racism typified not only the social practice of the Party, but also the policy of the Nazi state.<sup>58</sup> Yet already before 1939 there had been foreigners working in the Reich; between 1933 and 1936 they grew in number from 140,000 to almost 230,000, not including seasonal workers in agriculture.<sup>59</sup> Until the Second World War there was no special legislation relating to foreign workers.

<sup>53</sup> On the involvement of the HSChA see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 64694-6 [43949], and BA NS 18/409 together with PK, V. I. 27/339 of 2 June 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 26-7. See the mention in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 200-1.

<sup>54</sup> Report from KL Prachatitz in Gau Bayerische Ostmark of March 1943, BA NS 6/525, 1-50, here 4, and undated 'Situation and activity report of Gau Halle-Merseburg for May 1943', BA NS 6/106, 19-25, here 20-1, written by the GPL.

<sup>55</sup> Report by Hermann Röhn to PK (14 Jan. 1944), BA NS 6/167, 80-3, here 81 (quotation). These discussions were, according to Röhn, finally prevented only by 'strict management' of the meetings by the Party's cell leader.

<sup>56</sup> This speech of 23 Mar. 1944 is in IfZ, Fa 91/3, 609-18, here 611-12. Opinion in the Reich propaganda leadership was a good deal more critical: Cerff in a memorandum on the situation with the NSDAP in June 1943 complained that 'the Party is currently more or less giving up in too many areas'; Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, viii. 413 (3 June 1943).

<sup>57</sup> *Wirtschaftspolitisches Sofortprogramm*, 31, not taken into consideration in the interpretations by Kissenkoetter, *Gregor Straßer*, 83-122, and Lorentz, *Industrieelite*, 80-102.

<sup>58</sup> On the conceptualizing of the term racism see Süß, *Volkskörper*, 20-2.

<sup>59</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit*, 21-38.

The attack on Poland on 1 September 1939 brought a change in the number of foreign workers in Germany. First, more than 215,000 Polish prisoners of war were deported into the Reich and forced to work on harvesting the root crops. This forced recruitment was done through outposts of the labour offices, which had moved into Poland together with the Wehrmacht. The work deployment of Poles saw the beginning of the pattern of sharing the management of this that was followed in all later recruitment of forced labourers. The prisoners of war were selected by the Wehrmacht, and civilian workers by the SS and police authorities,<sup>60</sup> before being finally allocated to their employment by the labour offices. Farmers, heads of businesses, and administrative authorities needing workers could ask their local labour office to supply these. The decision in October 1939 to make widespread use of foreign labour resulted from economic imperatives; between 31 May 1939 and 31 May 1940 the number of persons employed in Germany had shrunk from 39.5 to barely 36 million. Over this period, more than 4.5 million working men had been drafted into the Wehrmacht;<sup>61</sup> they were lost mainly to civilian production, since the armaments industry was less affected by the call-up.

The Hess staff and the Party bowed to the economic constraints that led to the import of Polish labour; but they never lost sight of their own racist objectives. Hess, Bormann, and their staff received regular monthly reports from the Gauleiters and their Gau economic advisers on the use being made of the Poles.<sup>62</sup> Weekly reports from the SD were also analysed. All the reports coming to the Hess staff in the autumn of 1939 were full of complaints about what was said to be the over-benign behaviour of the German population towards the Poles, and spoke of cases of suspected sexual relations with German women, and of the Poles' 'laziness and rebelliousness'.<sup>63</sup> One has to be careful about taking these reports as a reflection of the actual circumstances; to a large extent they emanated from the regional and local Party. They were aimed for one thing at persuading the relevant authorities to construct a systematic barrier between the German population and the Polish workers; and for another the Poles, whom the Party officials regarded as an 'inferior race', were meant to be treated as harshly as possible. Their views on this are expressed in the creed of the Party's head of propaganda in Kreis Lippe: 'The cudgel helps more than kind words.'<sup>64</sup> There is reason to think

<sup>60</sup> The machinery for enrolment of workers in the various occupied territories is described by Eisenblätter, 'Grundlinien', 324–39; Madajczyk, *Okkupationspolitik*, 216–32; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 449–501; Quinkert, 'Terror und Propaganda', and Klinkhammer, *Zwischen Bündnis und Besatzung*, 188–97, 489–529.

<sup>61</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 926–32, table.

<sup>62</sup> On the GWB reports, which covered industrial and economic developments in their Gaue, see BA NSD 3/20 and Kratzsch, *Gauwirtschaftsapparat*, 52–9.

<sup>63</sup> Unsigned, undated report from GL Westfalen-Nord for November 1939, StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Hauptleitung/32, and *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, ii. 476–7 (20 Nov. 1939). What is said in SD reports needs to be treated with caution, as the informants were to a substantial extent the local political leaders; see Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*, 246–60, here 255.

<sup>64</sup> See his letter to the Party's GPL (19 July 1941), StA Detmold, L 113/845, and the analysis in Ruppert, 'Der nationalsozialistische Geist', 270–5.

that this motto represented the attitude of the close on one million NSDAP officials in the local branches, and that this racism was part of their basic mental baggage. The Hess staff carried this indiscriminate racism of the Party into the Reich ministries. From the winter of 1939 onwards Hess, Bormann, and their staff urged the labour administrators and the SS and police to make life harder for the Polish forced labourers.<sup>65</sup> These initiatives culminated on 8 March 1940 in Himmler's notorious 'Polish decrees package', which consisted of ten orders. A nightly curfew was imposed on Polish workers, and they were forbidden to use public transport, attend cultural events or church services, or enter bars and restaurants. They also now had to wear a distinguishing badge. The Hess staff and NSDAP were charged with keeping a watch on Polish workers, and cooperating with the local police to this end.<sup>66</sup> Himmler's decrees formed the beginnings of a separate, racist system of law for Poles, which was further developed from 1940/1 on.<sup>67</sup>

What role did the NSDAP now play, after the decrees, in monitoring Polish forced labourers? For one, the local Party offices acted as before as the source of reports to the Hess staff, which worked to place the Poles at a legal disadvantage compared to German *Volksgenossen*. In this, denunciations from 'ordinary Germans' played an important part. Hess and Bormann took steps, for instance, to have the food ration for Poles reduced after Germans had complained about their being allegedly 'overfed'.<sup>68</sup> A further speciality of the Party was the 'shearing squads' who waylaid German women in the street and cut their hair off for having allegedly 'had dealings with Poles'.<sup>69</sup> This accusation did not necessarily have to mean sexual relations; it was enough for Party activists to hear that women were meeting and chatting to Poles.<sup>70</sup> These women could be sentenced by the courts, or sent to a concentration camp.<sup>71</sup> Polish men who had sexual relations with German women were risking the death sentence, carried out in public view by the local Gestapo.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See the file note by a Hess staff official (5 Mar. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 68119–22 [40146], and BA NS 18/612. These initiatives stemmed from numerous demands by local political leaders; for an example see Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 374 n. 226.

<sup>66</sup> The part of the 'decree package' relevant to the NSDAP can be found in Bormann announcement 42/40 of 4 July 1940, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 555–61. The best treatment of this is by Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo*, 73–4.

<sup>67</sup> The topic is dealt with fully in Majer, *Non-Germans*.

<sup>68</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 4572 f. [41883], and BA R 3601/159. On food rationing in the Second World War in general see Corni and Gies, *Brot*, 555–75.

<sup>69</sup> Situation report for February 1940, *Deutschland-Berichte*, vol. 1940, 91–154, here 101, and letter from Himmler to Hess (8 Mar. 1940), *Documenta occupationis*, ix. 36–7.

<sup>70</sup> This could come about through denunciations or through observation by the Party organization; see letter from Landwirtschaftsstelle Neustadt a.d. Saale to the NSDAP Kreisleiter (22 July 1940), Hohmann, *Landvolk*, ii. 400–2, and Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation*, 118–19.

<sup>71</sup> Herlemann, 'Der Bauer', 275–86; Boll, 'Das wird man nie mehr los', 249–57, 261–6; Kundrus, 'Verbotener Umgang', 165–70, and Schmidt, 'Todesstrafe', 125–9.

<sup>72</sup> One case of the execution of a Pole carried out in the presence of the Party local branch leader, who read out the death sentence, is described by Boll, 'Das wird man nie mehr los', 259. For 'friendly dealings' with German women Polish men were also sent to a work education camp, where they mouldered in living conditions similar to those of a concentration camp; see Lotfi, *KZ der Gestapo*, 138.



From September 1940, Polish women who had relations with German men spent three weeks in 'protective custody' (*Schutzhaft*).<sup>73</sup>

When Poles were brought in to work in 1939/40 the function of the NSDAP in the Nazi state's policy towards foreign workers had already become clear; it consisted first of taking the racist sentiments of the Party faithful and of the German population (which given the Party's widespread permeation of society sometimes came to the same thing!) and using them to discriminate legally against Polish workers. And secondly the Party aimed at keeping the Polish workers and German population apart, to this end intensifying its social control over the home front. Racism and repression, as social practices of the NSDAP, thus affected both the foreign workforce and ordinary Germans, women in particular. The Party's repression was applied indiscriminately to all foreigners working in Greater Germany, no matter what country they came from. This became evident soon after the campaign in the west in May 1940 and the victory over France, when the use of forced labour took on a new dimension. On October 1940 a total of 1.2 million French prisoners of war were working inside Germany,<sup>74</sup> and the use of foreign manpower changed from being a temporary phenomenon into a permanent measure. The Party seemed to have come to terms with this development. After a Party meeting in the Hess staff that discussed the employment of foreign labourers in the Ruhr mines, Joachim Eggeling, the Gauleiter of Halle-Merseburg, complained in a memorandum to the deputy Führer that, with his views on using foreign manpower, he was clearly a lone voice within the Party.<sup>75</sup> It was, Eggeling said, posing an 'enormous biological threat' to the German *Volkskörper*, the 'body of the nation', if foreign workers were employed in mining. It was his opinion that by doing such physically demanding work they could feel themselves superior to the 'German race', and he urged that foreigners be used for more menial tasks.

Eggeling's comments may not have been in tune with the Hess staff's more pragmatic attitude to the deployment of foreigners; but they were wholly representative of the views held in the middle and lower ranks of the Party, and this was reflected in harsh behaviour towards the foreign workforce.<sup>76</sup> The indiscriminate racism put out by Eggeling in respect of the foreign workforce points to a particular phenomenon: historical accounts of forced labour in the Third Reich time and again make the point that the Nazi regime sought to establish a 'racial hierarchy' among the foreign workers.<sup>77</sup> Where the NSDAP is concerned (at least, up to the end of 1941) this does not apply, since its activists made no distinction between 'racially' good and bad foreigners. This

<sup>73</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 131–3.

<sup>74</sup> The situation of French workers is treated at length in Bories-Sawala, *Franzosen im Reichseinsatz*, ii. 13–356.

<sup>75</sup> Memo by Eggeling (3 Aug. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 203 01532–41 [14455], and PA Berlin, Inland I Partei 48/1.

<sup>76</sup> Roth, *Parteikreis*, 329–32, and Ruppert and Riechert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 143–9.

<sup>77</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 95–100, calls this the 'concept of national differentiation'.



can be seen most of all in the treatment of foreign workers by local Party activists; one Kreis leader in Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, had French workers arrested when they wanted to visit compatriots in their free time and took the train to do so.<sup>78</sup> Some of the Party hotheads went so far as to demand the death penalty for German women who 'had contact with the French', because in these cases the public cutting-off of hair 'had had virtually no success'.<sup>79</sup> There was hardly any difference made in the Party's treatment of the Danes, Dutch, Belgians, and Norwegians who were enticed to work in Germany between May 1940 and June 1941.<sup>80</sup> For the NSDAP even the 'western workers', who in official parlance were counted as among the 'Aryan races', were on principle unwanted guests.

This indiscriminate racism was seen most clearly with the Italian workers who in September 1941, totalling more than 270,000, represented just on 13 per cent of the foreign workforce in the Reich.<sup>81</sup> This high number was due to the fact that fascist Italy was Germany's ally. The Italians, who up to mid-1943 were not forced labourers, had to put up with the same discriminatory treatment at the hands of the Party as the Poles and French; for example, two Italian workers who had had a relationship with German women were beaten up by Party activists, and the women had their hair shorn.<sup>82</sup> After Benito Mussolini had personally intervened with Hitler, a circular from Bormann forbade the shearing of women's hair who had had 'relations with workers from friendly states'. This did not however mean that all such acts ceased from then on—the racist image of the 'dirty Wop' was far too deeply rooted in the NSDAP for that.<sup>83</sup>

It was not until the deployment of Russian workers after October 1941 that there was a shift away from this blanket racist discrimination by the NSDAP against foreign workers to treatment differentiated along racist lines. The idea of now also making use of Soviet forced labourers in the Nazi war economy stems from an initiative by a few armaments firms in the Ruhr.<sup>84</sup> At the time there was a shortfall of almost 2.6 million workers, more than 300,000 of them in the metals industry. Nonetheless it took until 31 October 1941 for Hitler to give his approval to committing Soviet prisoners of war in the Reich

<sup>78</sup> Report from the Gauleiter of Schleswig Holstein to the Party chancellery (18 Oct. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 502 00055–58 [15365], and LA Schleswig, Dept. 454/4. On the situation of forced labourers in Schleswig-Holstein in general see the anthology *Ausländerereinsatz in der Nordmark*.

<sup>79</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 124–31, here 129.

<sup>80</sup> Situation report by the Gauleiter of Schleswig Holstein to the PK (25 Oct. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 502 00071–82 [15399] and LA Schleswig, Dept. 454/4, and *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, viii. 2708–10 (28 Aug. 1941).

<sup>81</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.

<sup>82</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 213 00026–34 [25797], and PA Berlin, Büro Staatssekretär Italien, vi; Bormann circular 120/41 of 13 Oct. 1941, in *Verfügungen*, i. 412.

<sup>83</sup> An example of hair-shearing because of 'relations with Italians' occurring after the aforementioned prohibition can be found in *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 71172–3 [42253], and BA NS 18alt/712.

<sup>84</sup> The process by which this was decided is related in Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 143–57.

to forced labour. One reason for his hesitation may well have been the Party's racial policy objections. An opinion drafted by the Party's racial policy office (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*, RPolA) shows quite unambiguously that all the Soviet peoples were seen as 'subhuman', ranking even below the Poles.<sup>85</sup> In the NSDAP's racist mindset, these were now bringing the 'very lowest elements' into the Reich. After Hitler's decision on the principle of employing them, the use made of 'eastern workers', as the Soviet forced labourers were known, underwent a meteoric increase. From the 257,000 working in Germany in September 1941 their numbers shot up to 1.6 million by the middle of November 1942, accounting for a third of all foreign workers.<sup>86</sup> The Party chancellery and NSDAP reacted to this development with a twofold strategy: first, together with the Reich security main office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA), by stepping up police supervision of foreign workers.<sup>87</sup> Secondly, it tried to treat the western workers and those from friendly nations better than the eastern workers and Poles. Both aspects were to be coordinated in the working body on dealing with dangers arising from the employment of foreigners, which was formed on 3 December 1941.<sup>88</sup> This was an interministerial body, meeting in Berlin at irregular intervals and including representatives from the RSHA, Party chancellery, Wehrmacht, Reich labour ministry, Reich propaganda ministry, Reich Food Estate, and DAF. In April 1942 it was joined by Fritz Sauckel, the newly appointed general plenipotentiary for manpower (*Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz*, GBA).

From summer 1942 two factions arose within the working body, each with different priorities where using foreign labour was concerned: on one side the RSHA, demanding rigorous security policing measures against the 'inferior foreign workers', and on the other the propaganda ministry and the DAF, who wanted to improve the 'cultural welfare' of the workers in order to increase their readiness to perform well.<sup>89</sup> The Party chancellery adopted a mediating position, best described as its representative trying to preserve the racial difference

<sup>85</sup> PK, V. I. 15/168 of 21 Feb. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 65–6. On the RPolA's racial propaganda see Bormann to Schwarz (8 Dec. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 00379–80 [26018], and BA NS 22/138. Generally Grill, 'Nazi Movement', 357–62, and Uhle, *Neues Volk*, 145–96.

<sup>86</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 194.

<sup>87</sup> On the involvement of the NSDAP in monitoring the 'foreign workforce' see Himmler to Bormann (31 Aug. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 203 03058–60 [15134], and PA Berlin, Inland I Partei 87/1; PK, V. I. 38/215 of 29 May 1942, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 565–6; Bormann order 62/42 of 26 Aug. 1942, *ibid.* 414–17; priority letter Himmler (5 Sept. 1942), *Documenta occupationis*, ix. 182–7, and StA Münster, VDA/76. Local examples in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 375–7.

<sup>88</sup> The role of the working party is covered cursorily in Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 163–7. Its first meeting was on 16 Dec. 1941 in Berlin; see the convening letter (8 Dec. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 112 00125–6 [15462], and BA R 16/162.

<sup>89</sup> The propaganda ministry had by the end of 1941 spent more than RM2m. on the 'cultural welfare' of foreign workers through film, theatre, and variety performances; see the RMfVuP's 'Führer briefing note' (9 Dec. 1941), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 60086–7 [42004], and BA NS 18/171. On the publication of camp newspapers see *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xii. 4606–8 (29 Dec. 1942), and the study by Schiller, *NS-Propaganda*.

between the various nationalities among the workers. Two examples serve to illustrate this: the Party chancellery was receptive to the idea put forward by the DAF's central office of looking after the western workers more assiduously than before, and welcomed the plan to allow the French, Belgians, and Dutch to take part in KdF events.<sup>90</sup> In parallel with this the NSDAP's Gau film offices offered film shows for foreign workers.<sup>91</sup> The DAF also provided cultural entertainment in the foreign workers' camps, though not in those for eastern workers and Poles since welfare was there ruled out on racial grounds. In the working body the Party chancellery however found itself, because of its approval of cultural welfare for the western workers, clearly caught in the cross-fire. These activities of the DAF and KdF attracted criticism from the RSHA and Reich Food Estate because they could encourage work-dodging among the western workers.<sup>92</sup> The RSHA and Reich Food Estate thwarted attempts by the DAF to establish a 'welfare-for-foreigners contest between firms'.<sup>93</sup> The end of 1942 saw the start of a new round in the debate on cultural welfare for foreign workers, because the propaganda ministry went ahead with the publication of a leaflet in which 'better treatment' for all foreign workers was called for, and even included eastern workers and Poles in this.<sup>94</sup> Goebbels's objective was to boost the output of the foreign workforce, by improving their living and working conditions. He even called for the NSDAP to exert political influence on these 'foreign peoples',<sup>95</sup> though this ran diametrically counter to the institutionalized racism of the Party apparatus.

Goebbels's request for the quality of life for *all* foreign workers to be improved in order to boost their productivity met with bitter resistance from the RSHA and Party chancellery, who on racial grounds wanted Poles and eastern workers excluded. On 15 April 1943, after a lengthy debate, the working body issued an 'instruction leaflet on general principles for the treatment of the foreign workforce within the Reich'.<sup>96</sup> This stated that now all foreign workers should have a right to weatherproof clothing, adequate health care,

<sup>90</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 60109-10 [42295], and BA NS 18/172. On the role of the DAF see Boll, 'Das wird man nie mehr los', 237-43, and Leissa and Schröder, 'Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf', 229-36.

<sup>91</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 60098-100 [40854], and BA NS 18/471. See also Stahr, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 236-58.

<sup>92</sup> Undated file note from the RNSt representative on the working party meeting of 9 Apr. 1942, at which the RSHA expert had complained of a KdF excursion for French workers, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 112 00103-5 [15689], and BA R 16/162. On the part the RNSt played in Nazi policy towards foreign workers Herlemann, *Der Bauer*, 253-307, and Münkler, *NS Agrarpolitik*, 399-423.

<sup>93</sup> File note by RNSt representative (31 Mar. 1943) on the working party's meeting that day, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 112 00081-84 [16733], see BA R 16/162. On rivalry between DAF and RNSt before the war see Corni and Gies, *Brot*, 212-28.

<sup>94</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 09012-40 [16676], and BA R 43 II/650 c and Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 256-63.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from the RPL's main film office to PK (3 Oct. 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 61402-3 [43253], and BA NS 18/284.

<sup>96</sup> Leaflet, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 112 00131-37 [16850], and BA R 16/162, quoted in Bormann circular 70/43 of 5 May 1943, in *Verfügungen*, v. 129-34.

and cultural welfare in their camps. It was further forbidden for Germans to ill-treat foreign workers. These provisions however had little meaning; what help would camp newspapers and propaganda films be, when the working conditions, health care, and clothing for the Poles and eastern workers were getting worse and worse?<sup>97</sup> The Party chancellery and NSDAP also made sure that their rations were constantly reduced.<sup>98</sup> In cooperation with the RSHA the Party also increased its repressive measures against 'slackers' and foreign workers breaking their contracts. Both of these had in 1943/4 become a mass phenomenon, and the police and NSDAP had to spend a large part of their time organizing hunts to capture 'absentee' foreign workers.<sup>99</sup>

It was the declared aim of the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations to separate the German population as much as possible from the foreign workers. This was nurtured by a racist ideology that saw in the use of foreign labour a danger to 'Aryan blood', and looked for safety in a policy of apartheid.<sup>100</sup> To this end the Party was active in several fields of policy: the Hess staff and subsequently the Party chancellery pushed through the passing of racially motivated special regulations for Poles and eastern workers that deprived them of all rights. Regional and local Party activists acted as 'auxiliary police', keeping an eye on both the foreign workers and the 'Aryan *Volks-gemeinschaft*'; racism and repression were directed against the foreign workers and against Germany's own population—especially German women. The second aim, pursued by the NSDAP from October 1941, was a differentiation between the various nationalities of foreign worker. An important condition for operating this nationality-based social privilege was corralling the foreign workers in nationally homogeneous camp communities. The cultural welfare provided by the DAF to, for example, western workers did not stem from humanitarian considerations; it was meant rather to keep them quiet, and spur them to higher output.

### 3. NSDAP ASSISTANCE IN THE AIR WAR

From the start of the Second World War the NSDAP took an ever greater part in activities connected with countering the effects of Allied air raids on the Reich. The Nazi regime had been making preparations for dealing with enemy air attack since the setting-up of the Reich defence committee in 1933/4. The Reich ministry of aviation (*Reichsluftfahrtministerium*, RLM) had on the one hand developed military air defence,<sup>101</sup> and on the other pushed

<sup>97</sup> On daily life in the camps see Schwarze, *Kinder*, 68–96, and Stefanski, *Zwangsarbeit in Leverkusen*, 133–71.

<sup>98</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 4621–2 [44604], and BA R 3601/175.

<sup>99</sup> Bormann circular 34/43 of 10 July 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 596–617; StA Münster, VDA/115, and Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo', 185–8.

<sup>100</sup> The term used by Herbert, 'Apartheid', alluding to the racial separation practised in South Africa until the 1990s.

<sup>101</sup> On the development of Reich air defence see Boog, *Luftwaffenführung*, 151–214; *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 478–91, 521–52, and Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 61–92.

ahead with civilian air-raid protection. The latter term embraced all the authorities who were to be active before or after enemy raids.<sup>102</sup> Under the chief of police, as local head of air-raid protection, there were the Safety and Assistance Service (*Sicherheits- und Hilfsdienst*, SHD), fire brigade, fire protection police, and the technical emergency corps (*Technische Nothilfe*, TeNo), responsible for extinguishing extensive blazes and clearing debris.<sup>103</sup> Administering emergency measures fell to the local government authorities.<sup>104</sup> The Reich Air Raid Protection League (*Reichsluftschutzbund*, RLB), which came directly under the aviation ministry, was to organize 'self-protection by the civilian population against air raids'.<sup>105</sup> The NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations were responsible for self-protection measures on their own premises.<sup>106</sup> Moreover there had been a section in the NSDAP work plan drawn up by Dept. M of the Hess staff in 1938/9 headed 'Action during air-raid warnings', in which the *Hoheitsträger* were given a wide range of tasks after an air raid. Thus, the Kreisleiter was to organize 'during an air-raid warning . . . the political guidance and care of the population in his Kreis', and to 'call on the *Volksgeossen* to follow the instructions of the local ARP leader'. He was in particular to take measures 'to overcome crises that have arisen or may be feared'.<sup>107</sup> This was emphasizing the NSDAP's claim on taking charge of the public during air raids. After the very first incursions into Reich airspace by the Royal Air Force in September 1939 the Kreis authorities made more systematic preparations for what they had to do after air raids. In the spring of 1940 the Cologne Kreis authorities worked out a 'special action plan' under which the Kreisleiter was—as provided for in the Hess staff's work plan—at the centre of all the emergency measures to be carried out by the local Party.<sup>108</sup> He was to call on the NSV and other Party agencies to make ready provisions and emergency accommodation for the victims of air raids, and see to the salvaging of household goods.<sup>109</sup> In the months that

<sup>102</sup> On the structure of civilian ARP see StdF, Dept. M: I Az. B 21/24 July 1939, Tgb. No. 1070/39 g. (24 July 1939), BA NS 6/453, 10–13; Hampe, *Der zivile Luftschutz*, 49–94, and Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 93–135.

<sup>103</sup> These units also belonged to the Orpo, the most important of the civilian ARP authorities; see Lotfi, 'Befehlshaber'.

<sup>104</sup> On this see for instance the post-war report on the activity of the Cologne local administration, *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, II/1. 11–20, and Karola Fings in the present volume.

<sup>105</sup> Hugo Grimme, hon. president of the RLB: 'Der Reichsluftschutzbund. Aufgaben, Organisation und Tätigkeit', *Dritte Reich im Aufbau*, II. 168–218, and Hampe, *Der zivile Luftschutz*, 439–51.

<sup>106</sup> StdF, Dept. M, 'Anweisung für den Aufbau und die Durchführung des erweiterten Selbstschutzes und Selbstschutzes in den Dienststellen der NSDAP, ihrer Gliederungen und angeschlossenen Verbände' (28 July 1939), BA NS 6/453, 8–9. In this connection the Party offices, in cooperation with the RLB, ran gas protection courses for their staff and distributed gasmasks to the public; BA NS 6/294, 62; StadtA Essen, Rep. 102/1031, and Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 128.

<sup>107</sup> StdF, Dept. M, 'Anordnungen und Richtlinien für den Einsatz des Kreisleiters im Kriege' (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 13–14, here 13 (quotation), and Roth, *ParteiKreis*, 307.

<sup>108</sup> See the unsigned plan 'Sonder-Einsatz der NSDAP' (5 Apr. 1940), HStA Düsseldorf RW 23/25. On the KL's functions after Allied air raids see Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 47–60.

<sup>109</sup> Already before war began the Hess staff had flirted with the idea of having the Kreiswaller and Ortswaller identified by a green armband with the words 'Luftschutz – NSDAP'

followed the Cologne model, in which the Kreisleiters made use of the NSV and other party organs for giving emergency aid after air raids, was extended to all large and medium-sized cities being bombed by the Allies. During the bombing war the Party also took over more and more tasks that tied in with its claim to people management. In December 1940 Bormann had to lay down afresh the NSDAP's powers in respect of air-raid protection.<sup>110</sup> Besides help to the victims of bombing, which fell to the NSV, the NSDAP was now to make political leaders available to the Orpo to keep watch on observance of the blackout regulations.<sup>111</sup> The NSDAP had also to see to it that the public in the air-raid shelters maintained 'a confident attitude'.<sup>112</sup> Finally, Bormann urged that pregnant women and schoolchildren be evacuated, on a voluntary basis, from large cities at risk from air attack, and 'cared for' in the reception areas by the NSV and NSF. All three activities had been under way since the beginning of the war through local NSDAP initiatives, supported in many ways by other institutions involved in civilian ARP. Bormann's order was to this extent merely legitimizing a long-standing practice in the NSDAP that had grown up under the Allies' bombing war.

Bormann's proposal for the evacuation of women and children from threatened areas tied in with a campaign that had been hastily improvised only a few weeks before. After London and Coventry had been bombed by the German Luftwaffe in the summer of 1940 the RAF had made a number of retaliatory raids on large German cities, such as Berlin on 26 September 1940. This raid, which in fact lasted four hours, gave the Reich and Party authorities, and Hitler in particular, such a scare that countermeasures were taken. On 27 September Baldur von Schirach, the Gauleiter of Vienna and earlier NSDAP Reich youth leader, recommended to Hitler that the Hitler Youth should evacuate children of school age from Berlin and Hamburg as a precaution.<sup>113</sup> Hitler approved the proposal, and left its implementation to Schirach and Bormann. The head of Bormann's staff thereupon contacted the Reich education ministry and told the secretary of state Werner Zschintzsch that Hitler had decided to have school-age children evacuated, with parental agreement, from areas at risk from air

(ARP—NSDAP); see item 15, StdF, Dept. M: 'Anweisungen und Richtlinien für den Einsatz der NSV im Kriege' (undated, c. June 1939), BA NS 6/146, 23–4, here 24. This plan however came to nothing, and not until January 1940 did the Hess staff manage to have ten PLs from the Gau staffs equipped with such a green armband giving them authority to be out on the street and in public places after an air-raid warning had been sounded; see StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5056, 132.

<sup>110</sup> Bormann order 95/40 of 13 Dec. 1940, BA NS 6/820, 188–90.

<sup>111</sup> Immediately after the war began the local NSDAP branches had devoted themselves to this task with particular verve; see StA Augsburg, HJ-Bann Günzburg/24, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 372–3.

<sup>112</sup> On social control of population in air-raid shelters see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/2191, and StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/636.

<sup>113</sup> On the reaching of this decision see Schirach's undated draft on removing school-age youngsters from Berlin and Hamburg, and his undated minute on the Führer briefing of 27 Sept. 1940, both repr. in Kock, *Der Führer*, 348–52; Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, viii. 349 (28 Sept. 1940), and KTB OKW, i. 105–6 (1 Oct. 1940). The prime accounts are to be found in Kock, *Der Führer*, 76–81, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 883–91.



raids.<sup>114</sup> The evacuations were to be done 'not as a government campaign, but through the Party offices'. They were to be managed by Schirach, making use of the NSV, Hitler Youth, and NSLB. The expression soon commonly used for this measure at the time was 'extended evacuation of the children to the country' (*Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung*, KLV).<sup>115</sup>

After Hitler's decision on 27 September 1940 Bormann and Schirach set to work to organize KLV; on the same day the head of Bormann's staff issued a circular to the chief government and Party offices setting out the principles for it. This said that the Führer had ordered that children from towns and cities 'that are repeatedly having air-raid warnings at night' were to be sent to other parts of Germany. This was to apply particularly to children from districts that did not have adequate air-raid shelters.<sup>116</sup> The Gauleiters and regional Party offices had in turn to make sure that the parents entrusted their children to the KLV.<sup>117</sup> On 2 October 1940 Schirach issued a decree setting out the ways in which the KLV was to be implemented, and the allocation of responsibilities between the Party offices involved. Children aged 6-10 (Group I) were to be evacuated by the NSV, those aged 10-14 and juveniles (Group II) by the Hitler Youth. Group I were to be housed with families, and those in Group II in communal camps.<sup>118</sup> The recruiting of children for KLV was done through the schools and the NSLB, Party cell and block leaders, the NSV, and the Hitler Youth. A further Reich office was set up within the Reich youth headquarters to coordinate KLV measures with the other Party authorities.<sup>119</sup> By the end of 1940 nearly 380,000 children and young people had already been evacuated, around half of them from the Ruhr and the others from Berlin and Hamburg.

While the KLV campaign was already in full swing, the RAF carried out a large-scale raid on Mannheim on the night of 15 December 1940. This Operation ABIGAIL marked a turning point in British air war strategy, as now for the first time the German civilian population as well were being targeted.<sup>120</sup> In

<sup>114</sup> File note Zschintzsch (27 Sept. 1940), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiche 5602 [40582], and BA R 4901/203, repr. in Kock, *Der Führer*, 352.

<sup>115</sup> This term went back to an institution that had existed since 1872; at that time the *Wohltätige Schulverein* (Schools Benevolent Association) in Berlin had begun to take children to the country for a limited time, so that they might benefit there from a well-balanced diet. Small children and their mothers were also sent to the country for their health in the National Socialist state. This was done under the NSV 'mother and child care' scheme, and served primarily as a health welfare measure; see BA NS 37/1003, and Kock, *Der Führer*, 70-1. The Nazi regime made use of the KLV title in order to disguise the fact that this was evacuation made necessary by the bombing; see the document in Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 417.

<sup>116</sup> Repr. in Kock, *Der Führer*, 353-4 (quotations).  
<sup>117</sup> Bormann circular to all Gauleiters, 30 Sept. 1940, StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5059, 48-9. An example of the activity of one Gauleiter in the KLV context is in Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, viii, 352-6 (30 Sept. and 1 Oct. 1940). On this see Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi, 10-11, and Klee, *Im 'Luftschutzkeller'*, 44-5.

<sup>118</sup> The Schirach decree repr. in Kock, *Der Führer*, 354-8. On its genesis see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 05612-20 [24928], and BA R 2/11914.

<sup>119</sup> On the organization of this office and KLV coordination, see an American post-war report in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1, 494-506, here 497-502; Kock, *Der Führer*, 84-7; Krause, *Flucht*, 46-52, and Klee, *Im 'Luftschutzkeller'*, 61-70.

<sup>120</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vi, 492-521.



the weeks and months that followed Churchill's war cabinet debated deeply on the basic concepts of the bombing war against Greater Germany, in the course of which the view gained acceptance that to military targets needed to be added those of relevance for enemy morale. This meant nothing less than a stepping-up of the trend on the British side towards area bombing. In the summer of 1941 the RAF systematically tested this strategy, for instance with raids on Münster repeated over several days from 6–10 July 1941.<sup>121</sup> From then on the bombing war on Germany became ever more intensive. As a result KLV was no longer a temporary measure, but grew as the war went on to become a permanent scheme, affecting close on 2 million children between the ages of 6 and 14.<sup>122</sup> Most of these children, 1.2 million, were billeted by the NSV with families, while some 800,000 were placed in the Hitler Youth's KLV camps. Daily life in these camps, in which schooling went on as usual, was marked by paramilitary drill, conflicts between the inmates and the HJ camp staff, and a latent readiness for aggressive behaviour between the young people themselves.<sup>123</sup> The Party authorities involved also tried hard to prevent any religious ministry inside the camps.<sup>124</sup>

The KLV scheme, financed from the Reich budget, was a precautionary measure by the Nazi regime to protect children and young people from the Allied air raids;<sup>125</sup> with it there also of course went fresh opportunities for political indoctrination of the young. The influence the Hitler Youth had on government education policy in the KLV context was however very much limited;<sup>126</sup> the bulk of the children were placed by the NSV with families, and had no contact at all with the KLV camps run by the Hitler Youth.<sup>127</sup> The teachers in the KLV moreover mostly remained the same, and were not necessarily replaced with far more fanatical Nazis or more radical Party members from the Hitler Youth. The school curriculum in the camps hardly changed. And the Hitler Youth's potential for exerting influence on children in the camps

<sup>121</sup> On the raids on Münster, which claimed fifty dead and more than 400 severely injured and during which 3,000 buildings were badly damaged, see StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/637; situation report by Landgerichtspräsident Münster (18 July 1941), *Meldungen aus Münster 1924–1944*, 214–18, and Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 15–45, esp. 22–30.

<sup>122</sup> See the detailed figures in Kock, *Der Führer*, 134–43.

<sup>123</sup> On daily life in the KLV camps see Hermand, *Hitler Youth in Poland*, 1–103, who (with gaps) spent more than two years in them, and Kock, *Der Führer*, 144–93.

<sup>124</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 34/2; StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/661; *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, ix. 3509–11 (23 Mar. 1942), and Kock, *Der Führer*, 277–306.

<sup>125</sup> Fritz Reinhardt, StS in the Reich finance ministry, to Bormann (26 Nov. 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 06525–8 [26747], and BA R 2/11914; Bormann circular 188/42 of 7 Dec. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 34–5; Kock, *Der Führer*, 261–77, and Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*, 896–7.

<sup>126</sup> See contra Kock, *Der Führer*, 307–38.

<sup>127</sup> KLV for the 6- to 10-year-olds and the role of the NSV requires further analysis; see StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/659–660; PK, V. I. 60/727 of 3 Dec. 1941, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 35, and *Der NSV-Helfer*, iii/4 (March/April 1941). Cf. inadequate comments in Zolling, *Zwischen Integration und Segregation*, 223–7; Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 138–9, and Kock, *Der Führer*, 119–33, 325–7.

always depended on the extent to which their parents handed them over to the care of the KLV in the first place.<sup>128</sup>

After 14 February 1942 the bombing war on Germany finally reached a new peak; on that day the British air ministry issued a directive to Bomber Command saying that the night-time area bombing raids were to be systematically extended to include the residential areas of German cities as well.<sup>129</sup> On the night of 28/9 March 1942 the RAF carried out a major raid on Lübeck; there were more than 300 dead, just on 800 injured, more than 1,800 houses totally destroyed and 10,000 damaged, with almost 60 per cent of all dwellings rendered to varying degrees uninhabitable.<sup>130</sup> The Lübeck raid faced the local ARP headquarters, local authorities, NSDAP, and NSV with problems they had never met before. For the 25,000 rendered homeless the NSV's Lübeck Kreis officials ensured that local food stores were opened up and the air-raid victims very generously supplied. According to an internal NSV account, 1.8 million oranges, 10 tonnes of apples, 40,000 loaves of bread, 16,000 eggs, 5,000 pounds of butter, 3,500 cans of food, 2,800 boxes of smoked herrings, and 50 barrels of Bismarck herrings were distributed to the population. In the process large quantities of luxury goods, including champagne, spirits, chocolates, clothing, and shoes, were filched by NSV office managers. Only a few days after the raid, stories of this pilfering had spread like wildfire,<sup>131</sup> whereupon the Hamburg Kripo opened investigations on a number of NSV officials in Schleswig-Holstein. On 28 August 1942 the special court in Kiel sentenced three members of the NSV Gau administration to death for embezzlement, and a further eleven accomplices in the NSV organization were jailed, in some cases for several years.<sup>132</sup> One of the perpetrators was in fact executed. This draconian judgment was intended not least to preserve the NSV's image, which up to then had been so positive.

<sup>128</sup> On the problems the HJ and NSV repeatedly encountered in this see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/33209; PK, V. I. 33/325 of 31 July 1941, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 35; *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5918 (25 Oct. 1943); Hermand, *Hitler Youth in Poland*, 69–72, and Kock, *Der Führer*, 188–94, 250–7, and 318–21.

<sup>129</sup> On British air war strategy in 1942 see Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 558–80.

<sup>130</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iii. 587 (31 Mar. 1942), and the extract from the report by the Lübeck chief of police (30 Apr. 1942), *Ursachen und Folgen*, xx. 67–70. A main source is Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 36–47, here 43, 45 (figures).

<sup>131</sup> Extract from an undated situation report by KL Lübeck, *Ursachen und Folgen*, xx. 70–1; telex Justus Beyer, liaison official between RSHA and PK, to Himmler (27 June 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 102 01306–09 [15900], and BA NS 19neu/2428 together with Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, v. 48–9 (3 July 1942).

<sup>132</sup> BA NS 1/2259; undated Führer briefing note No. 74 from Reich justice minister, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 101 28825 [15965], and BA R 43 II/1559 a; Hilgenfeldt to Friedrichs (6 July 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 306 00573–5 [15902], and BA BDC SS-Offizier Wilhelm Janowsky; reference to the sentence of Kiel special court in RK minute (28 Aug. 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 101 28877 [15966], and BA R 43 II/1559 a, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, v. 418 (29 Aug. 1942). The events are set out in Hansen, *Wohlfahrtspolitik*, 342–7, and Bajohr, *Parvenüs*, 166–71.

Meanwhile the RAF's area bombing of German cities continued. From 23 to 27 April 1942 more than 1,500 tonnes of incendiary and fragmentation bombs fell on Rostock.<sup>133</sup> Already by the morning of the 26th the city had between 30,000 and 40,000 homeless, and the destruction was on a par with that in Lübeck a few weeks earlier. The measures by the NSV again took their usual form of providing temporary accommodation and food. There was however a fresh aspect: experience during the spring of 1942 had brought the Party leadership to the view that the local resources of the SHD, fire police, and Orpo were 'not up to the tasks presented by a large-scale raid'. Consequently NSDAP 'action teams' had been set up which, under the command of the Party's local leaders, could start work while the raid was still going on. These teams sometimes numbered several hundred persons, who could through a complicated reporting system be assembled from the area surrounding a city under air attack. Their purpose was to muster all available manpower resources of the Party, SS, SA, NSKK, and HJ to put out the fires.<sup>134</sup> According to the head of the Party chancellery, the NSDAP action teams in Rostock extinguished a total of 2,000 fires, and dug out more than 4,500 persons from bombed buildings. The Party's work in people management on the home front henceforth included activities for ensuring the basic survival of the population.

The same can be seen in the case of the 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on the night of 31 May 1942, where the NSDAP suddenly found itself having to care for 60,000 people rendered homeless. One problem that arose here was that the mobile kitchens intended to feed the victims had themselves been destroyed in the raid. The Cologne Kreis and local branch authorities had to improvise, drumming up 26,000 meals from restaurants, food stores, bakeries, and butchers' shops.<sup>135</sup> In general the RAF raids in spring 1942 had shown that civilian air-raid protection needed a better division of labour between the local authorities, Orpo, NSDAP, and RLB.<sup>136</sup> For one thing, this involved the allocation of manpower, and the question of which body had first call on the personnel available for giving emergency assistance.<sup>137</sup> And for another, what was actually to be done after a raid needed to be discussed together beforehand, since the SHD, RLB, and Party action teams often got in each other's way.<sup>138</sup> In many of the Gaue threatened by air raids

<sup>133</sup> Bormann circular 27/42 g. of 4 June 1942, BA NS 6/339, 100-7 (quotation 101); Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iv. 191-2 (28 Apr. 1942), and Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 48-59.

<sup>134</sup> The Hitler Youth's SRD, too, was from 1942 increasingly called on for fighting fires after an air raid; see StA Augsburg, HJ-Gebiet Schwaben/27; *Vorschriftenhandbuch der HJ*, ii. 901-7; Klose, *Generation im Gleichschritt*, 216-17, and Axmann, 'Das kann doch nicht das Ende sein', 328-9. Generally Hampe, *Der zivile Luftschutz*, 362-98.

<sup>135</sup> Final report by GL Köln-Aachen (15 June 1942), Rütter, *Köln*, 189-214, here 203-4, 209-10. Comprehensively on 'Operation MILLENIUM' Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 60-78.

<sup>136</sup> See diagram in StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5052, 132.

<sup>137</sup> The basis for demands on personnel is provided by § 2 of the *Luftschutzgesetz* (ARP Act) of 26 June 1935, which runs: 'All Germans are liable for giving in service and in kind . . . whatever may be necessary for implementing air-raid protection (ARP liability)'; see *RGBI.* I, 1935, 827-8.

<sup>138</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 37/22.

'Gau action staffs' were therefore set up, in which the government authorities, police, and Party agencies were to collaborate under the chairmanship of the relevant Reich defence commissioner (*Reichsverteidigungskommissar*, RVK).<sup>139</sup> On 17 December 1942 an ordinance from the Reich aviation minister, Göring, brought final clarity to the NSDAP's tasks in the civil defence sphere. He emphasized that the Party had 'sole responsibility in all matters relating to the guidance and care of the population'.<sup>140</sup> He recognized explicitly that with its action teams the NSDAP had now established its own ARP personnel, and called for 'harmonious collaboration' between all staff of the Party and state. The months that followed saw an appreciable improvement in cooperation in the civilian ARP field.

A further aspect of people management that the NSDAP claimed for its own during the Allies' air war was the relocation of the population from big cities under risk of air raids. Up to the spring of 1943 KLV had, with only a few regional exceptions, been the sole evacuation measure resulting from the air raids.<sup>141</sup> After the setting-up, at the end of 1942, of the interministerial air-raid damage committee (*Interministerieller Luftkriegsschädenaussschuß*, ILA) to coordinate the emergency aid given after air raids by the Reich, this changed; discussion was now about a precautionary full-scale relocating of the civilian population from areas threatened by air attack.<sup>142</sup> The influential supporters of a controlled relocation were the Reich interior ministry, the Party chancellery, and Goebbels, who as head of the ILA had become the most important authority in dealing with the results of the air war. On 19 April 1943 the interior ministry issued a decree, drafted in close consultation with the experts represented on the ILA, which would for the first time regulate evacuations across the whole of the Reich.<sup>143</sup> The most important item in this decree was the preordaining of dispatch and reception Gaue—that is to say, the population from one Gau could be evacuated only to a single, prearranged

<sup>139</sup> Priority letter RMI to RVK (6 May 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 06778–93 [26377], and BA R 2/11985, in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, i. 294–301; StA Detmold, L 113/1020; StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Münster/5053, and StadtA Bochum, 321/2. On the role of the RVK in the air war see Teppe, 'Reichsverteidigungskommissar', 291–2, and Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann'. The post of the RVK was combined with that of Gauleiter.

<sup>140</sup> ObdL/Arbeitsstab LS Nr. 3544/42, sgd. Göring (17 Dec. 1942), BA NS 6/294, 20–3, here 21 (quotations). Treated fully in Beer, *Kriegsaltag*, 137–63, here 138–9.

<sup>141</sup> The basis for relocating people was a decree from the RMI (28 Mar. 1941), in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 38–40, under which local authorities could arrange new accommodation for the population outside the disaster areas either as a precaution or after air raids. In practice what happened was that the NSV dealt with the transport to, and reception accommodation in, the countryside; see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 103 07061–72 [25349 and 25420], and BA R 2/12080, and StA Münster, Gauleitung-Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/658. On the evacuations up to the end of 1942 see Krause, *Flucht*, 81–92, and Klee, *Im Luftschuttkeller*, 83–96.

<sup>142</sup> On the forming of the ILA see BA R 1501/922, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 11145–91 [16264], and BA R 43 II/667.

<sup>143</sup> StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5070, 1–9, in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 124–131. A full account is given by Klee, *Im Luftschuttkeller*, 117–31.

reception Gau, and people could not themselves look for somewhere to go.<sup>144</sup> The general rule was that, as with KLV, the evacuations were to be a precautionary measure; but this controlled relocation also included the reception of the homeless after air raids. The prescribing of dispatch and reception Gaue did, it is true, now severely restrict freedom of choice in finding new quarters; but there continued to be no compulsory evacuation, either before or after air raids.<sup>145</sup>

From the spring of 1943 the whole machinery of the NSDAP was involved in the controlled evacuation effort. The Party chancellery and Reich propaganda headquarters produced a variety of leaflets for the evacuees and their hosts, giving detailed guidelines on how to behave towards each other and information on the government support being provided.<sup>146</sup> The main office for public welfare and regional NSV offices arranged the billets and provided the necessary rations for the journey.<sup>147</sup> The NSDAP representatives for mobilization in the Gaue and districts handled all the administrative matters connected with transport.<sup>148</sup> Regional and local offices of the Party and NSV had their hands full trying to convince the population, through propaganda, of the need for evacuation, and from 1943 this formed a large part of the Party's work. One has only to note that between 19 April 1943 and 11 January 1944 a total of 8,944,976 persons were evacuated by the NSV to appreciate how much time and manpower this demanded.<sup>149</sup> The Allied air war brought about a change in how the NSDAP dealt with people on the home front. From running more or less methodical campaigns designed to exert social control, it moved gradually to rather carrying out improvised relief measures. Put more directly, the NSDAP was no longer concerned with people management in the strict sense of the word—it had to give help, and make its presence felt by the public where the public's need was greatest.

<sup>144</sup> On the naming of these Gaue see the minute by Walter Tießler, contact point between the PK and RPL (30 Apr. 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiche 75307 [44368], and BA NS 18/830, and Goebbels to Meyer (4 May 1943), StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5171, 65–7.

<sup>145</sup> Clearly the RMI was undecided about such forced evacuation; see an unsigned minute about a meeting in the interior ministry (27 May 1943), StA Münster, Oberpräsidium Westfalen/5171, 101–14, here 104, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, viii. 453 (10 June 1943). Goebbels, Bormann, and the Gauleiters however refused to agree to such a measure; see Bormann to Lammers (3 July 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 11255–63 [17048], and BA R 43 II/668, and appeal by the GL Westfalen-Süd, Albert Hoffmann (9 July 1943), StadtA Dortmund, 424/79, 106.

<sup>146</sup> See *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 2, fiches 66157–83 [44582] and BA NS 18/500, as well as Bormann circular 69/43 of 4 May 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv. 393–5.

<sup>147</sup> See the unsigned report on the conference held by the welfare department in Mülheim-Ruhr on 30 Apr. 43, StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Gauamt für Volkswohlfahrt/642; StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/126, and StadtA Duisburg, 503/33–34.

<sup>148</sup> LHA Koblenz, 662, 3/304–6.

<sup>149</sup> See the account by the main office for public welfare, in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/2. 302–36.

## IV. On the Road to Total War, August 1943 to May 1945

### I. STRATEGIES FOR MOBILIZATION WITHIN THE PARTY

AFTER the Allied landing on Sicily on 10 July 1943, Italy—the Reich's most important ally—was more and more under military pressure; it soon became clear that the German and Italian forces were going to be hardly able to prevent Italy being occupied. This brought an escalation in the internal crisis that had been smouldering in Italy since the start of the year, and on 25 July 1943 Mussolini was forced by a right-wing authoritarian opposition to resign.<sup>1</sup> The news of a new Italian government being formed immediately awakened fears in Germany that fascism in Italy was at an end.<sup>2</sup> In Party circles there was the dread of a 'stab in the back', that one day there could be trouble in store for National Socialism too if the political opposition in the Reich managed to oust Hitler.<sup>3</sup> Around midday on 26 July 1943 the head of the Party chancellery sent a telex to all Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, and heads of the affiliated organizations explaining the conclusions the Party needed to draw from the 'Italian crisis'. Bormann insisted: 'Our work and our struggle must continue unwaveringly and unceasingly.' 'Enemies of the state who now [revealed] themselves' were to be handed over to the Gestapo, and 'worthless weaklings' excluded or ejected from the Party. Further, the 'men of the Party should work constantly to calm all nervous and agitated feelings'. They must at all times exhibit the 'unshakeable faith that the Führer will always do the right thing at the right time'.<sup>4</sup>

This call made on 26 July 1943 was the first shot in Bormann's 'hold firm' propaganda campaign within the Party.<sup>5</sup> Up to now this propaganda has been studied almost exclusively by looking at its oral or written manifestations. Following the Italian crisis there was however a significant shift in the Party's social practice, which came closer and closer to taking paramilitary forms. For example Goebbels, as Gauleiter of Berlin, set up a strike force consisting of Party activists to go round the capital's bars in working-class districts

<sup>1</sup> On the events in Italy on 25/6 July 1943 see Woller, *Abrechnung*, 9–35.

<sup>2</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 14, 5543 (29 July 1943). The same appears in Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 166 (26 July 1943). On the mood in Germany in general see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 210–11.

<sup>3</sup> On the situation in the NSDAP see the report by a Gestapo agent (26 July 1943), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 35/9. Goebbels alone was confident that a 'revolution against National Socialism [was] a sheer impossibility', see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 264 (10 Aug. 1943).

<sup>4</sup> Telex from Bormann to all RLs, GLs, and the affiliated organization heads (26 July 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 102 01000 [17098], and BA NS 19neu/1880.

<sup>5</sup> Mommsen, 'Rückkehr', 320–1.



in order to act 'with brute force against those spreading defeatism among the public'.<sup>6</sup> Other Gauleiters followed his example, and formed 'homeland protection units' to be used for the 'protection of property' and against an allegedly imminent rising by foreign workers, prisoners of war, and dissidents.<sup>7</sup> A number of Party officials now evidently tried to have internal unrest put down by their own paramilitary formations.<sup>8</sup> Initiatives of this kind met with resistance from Himmler, the Reichsführer SS and chief of German police, whom Hitler had made Reich minister of the interior on 20 August 1943.<sup>9</sup> Himmler was expressly against these paramilitary activities by the Party, because the war against the 'internal enemy' was a matter solely and wholly for the police.<sup>10</sup> In the end this conflict came down to which body wielded the dominant political power in the Reich—the Party or the police.

Himmler however found an important ally in Bormann, since the head of the Party chancellery had since as long before as 1933 always spoken against the NSDAP taking on government tasks, and had spelt out this view in a great many minutes and circulars.<sup>11</sup> Karl Wahl, the Gauleiter of Swabia, wrote to impress on Bormann that it was not the Party's job to take on 'policing functions', and that 'combating internal crises was indubitably first and foremost a task for the police'.<sup>12</sup> Bormann tried from August 1943 to divert the NSDAP's paramilitary energies into a different field. To this end he had the Party chancellery prepare for a second wave of the activation of the Party that after the defeat at Stalingrad had been hurriedly introduced with the closures and redundancies within the Party organization and the NSDAP evening meetings. In autumn 1943 the NSDAP had a twofold problem: for one, activism within the Party organization since the Italian crisis left a lot to be desired, and for another Keitel's order of 12 August 1943 meant that the call-up of those born

<sup>6</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 298 (16 Aug. 1943), and Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 464–5. The Berlin GL called this 'Organisation B', the B standing for *Brachialgewalt* (brute force).

<sup>7</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 102 00402–54 [17273], and BA NS 19neu/798, on the setting-up of homeland protection organizations in the Gaue of Baden and Schwaben.

<sup>8</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi. 11, 153 (25 Jan. 1944). The legal basis for combating internal unrest was provided by the law on the state of security emergency for protection of the people and Reich (21 May 1935), BA-MA RH 2/989, 20–1, in *Akten der Reichskanzlei*, ii/1, 589–90, doc. 161. If the internal security of the German Reich was endangered for any length of time, the Führer and Reich chancellor could declare a state of security emergency. This gave him total executive power which he could delegate to others; see Umbreit, *Deutsche Militärverwaltungen*, 13–14.

<sup>9</sup> BA R 43 II/1136 a, and Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*, 499–500.

<sup>10</sup> He used this argument in criticizing both Goebbels's 'Organisation B' and the similar moves by the Gauleiter of Swabia; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 410 (2 Sept. 1943), and Himmler to Wahl (21 Nov. 1943), BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Heinrich Himmler. Similarly, a speech by Himmler to the Gauleiters (6 Oct. 1943) in Himmler, *Geheimreden*, 162–83, here 168–9.

<sup>11</sup> On this basic premiss in Bormann's view of policy see the memo on the institution and position of the *Reichsluftspportkorps* (Reich sports flying corps) and *Staatsjugend* (22 Apr. 1936), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 124 00230–49 [11449], and BA NS 10/53; his file note for Pg Friedrichs and Pg Dr Klopfer (14 Apr. 1942), BA NS 6/318, 141, and Bormann circular 121/42 of 7 Aug. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 485–8.

<sup>12</sup> Bormann to Wahl (18 Oct. 1943), BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Heinrich Himmler.



1884–93—the group from which the NSDAP drew most of its recruits—was imminent.<sup>13</sup> To prevent the shortage of staff in the lower levels of the Party becoming even worse, Bormann announced on 16 September 1943 a ‘duty of service in wartime by Party comrades’. The *Hoheitsträger* would have the right to require every member of the Party to undertake work that was needing to be done.<sup>14</sup> Anyone dodging wartime service duty was to be expelled from the Party. The aim of this measure was, in the words of one of the Party chancellery staff, for the Party to distance itself, in the crisis, from all ‘hangers-on and bystanders’.<sup>15</sup>

Wartime service duty seems however to have made only a limited contribution to mobilizing Party members; for example, employers with Party members working in their company applied for certificates exempting them from it, citing their heavy workload as a reason. Far more important for the second wave of Party activation were the NSDAP’s ‘general musters of members’ and propaganda parades. Already by September 1943 there were loud complaints in the Party chancellery that Reich propaganda leadership was, because of a shortage among its own staff, now having hardly any influence on the ‘guidance’ of the Party members. As a result the only course open to the Party chancellery was ‘itself to take the initiative in stepping up the propaganda effort, man to man’.<sup>16</sup> On 29 September 1943 Bormann ordered that all local branches were to hold general musters of their members. The NSDAP must ‘constantly stiffen the fighting will of the German people, exert a positive influence on the public mood, and put every effort into countering all negativity’; Party members were to be ‘determinedly employed on this important task’, and ‘directed’ towards it.<sup>17</sup> The following day the head of the Party chancellery decreed that every three months ‘the whole Party [was], as in former days, to parade within the local branches’ areas’. These propaganda marches, in which only male Party members were to take part, also served to activate the Party.<sup>18</sup> The Gauleiters’ reports to the Party chancellery in autumn 1943 showed that between 70 and 80 per cent of Party members had taken part in the general musters.<sup>19</sup> The propaganda parades, on the other hand, seem to

<sup>13</sup> Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi, 745. Soon afterwards the PK and OKW came to an agreement that now for the first time the NSDAP could also apply for reserved status for honorary KALs, OLs, and Ortsgruppenamtsleiter; see OKW/Wehrersatzamt/Abt. E(Vb) No. 1667/43 g., sgd. Schelia (3 Sept. 1943), BA NS 6/320, 209; LHA Koblenz, 662, 3/253, and comments in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 333–7.

<sup>14</sup> Bormann circular 133/43 of 16 Sept. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv, 5–8, and *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00725–6 [17506], and BA R 3/1818. War service duty applied to female members as well; see PK, V. I. 14/121 of 23 May 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vi, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Paper by Pg Schütt (27 Aug. 1943), BA NS 6/793, 3–8. In Gau Westfalen-Süd it became the practice to dismiss one Pg from each local branch, so as to force home this requirement to serve; see StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/2. On the exclusion procedure and the ‘dismissals’ see Nolzen, ‘Parteigerichtbarkeit’, 977–8, 983.

<sup>16</sup> Paper by Schütt (1 Sept. 1943), BA NS 6/167, 25–7, here 25 (quotation).

<sup>17</sup> Bormann order 55/43 of 29 Sept. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv, 8–12, here 8 (quotations). The RPL was also involved in this campaign; see BA NSD 12/24.

<sup>18</sup> Bormann order 56/43 of 30 Sept. 1943, in *Verfügungen*, iv, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Pg Lindau, extract from Gau reports on the holding of general members’ musters and propaganda parades (23 Dec. 1943), BA NS 6/793, 36–46. This was due in part to the great pressure

have been a fiasco, since most rapporteurs either kept silent about them or mentioned problems that had arisen in holding them.<sup>20</sup>

In spring 1944 the Party chancellery signalled a fresh round in the activation of the Party. 'National Socialist family evenings' were to bring together 'families in towns and the countryside, without compulsion' and to 'familiarize them, gathered all together, with National Socialist ideas'.<sup>21</sup> The NS family evenings occupied a midway position between training inside the Party and a people management measure, since they were to take in both members of the HJ and BDM (who ought really to have been taught within their own groups) and their parents. These family evenings were however held only sporadically, since in the spring of 1944 the NSDAP was hopelessly overburdened.<sup>22</sup> At that time all civilian and military authorities were readying themselves for an Allied invasion, which was fully expected to be made on Germany's North Sea coast and to be decisive for the outcome of the war.<sup>23</sup> The Party chancellery saw to it, with the army recruitment authorities, that the NSDAP would have the staff it needed in the case of an invasion, ensured an agreed division of tasks between the Party and the Wehrmacht in the coastal areas in which an invasion was expected, and approached the head of army armament to have Party members issued with pistols and machine-guns.<sup>24</sup> On 11 May 1944 Bormann required all the Party's senior staff to be contactable at any hour of the day and night. Only a few weeks later he specified the tasks to be taken on by the Party's members and political leaders in the event of an invasion. To be able to repel an Allied invasion the first essential was for the Party to mobilize its entire staff.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore the Party organization must be ready, in the event of a withdrawal from parts of the Reich threatened by the enemy, to evacuate its own offices to further inside Germany and to remove files and card indexes as a precaution or, if in imminent danger, destroy them. When, in the morning mist of 6 June 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy, the NSDAP was at once given the all-clear with the news that contrary to expectations the homeland area was not yet affected. Only a few weeks later, however, a situation suddenly arose that made the NSDAP mobilize of its own accord.<sup>26</sup>

to take part; see RSHA to Beyer (10 Nov. 1943), BA NS 6/411, 396-404, here 398. Summarized in Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 337-43.

<sup>20</sup> Report by Röhn to PK (14 Jan. 1944), BA NS 6/167, 80-3, here 82, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 143 (21 Oct. 1943). The 2,508 propaganda parades held, according to a contemporary account, over a four-month period may be disregarded as insignificant, bearing in mind that at the time the NSDAP had more than 30,000 local branches, IfZ, Db 22.23.

<sup>21</sup> Bormann order 74/44 of 3 Apr. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vi. 25-8. BA NS 6/84, and the correspondence between Bormann and Rosenberg of Feb. 1944, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 03802-3, 33-4, 77-8, and 126 03909-12 [27819], together with BA NS 8/190.

<sup>22</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/26, and PK, V. I. 21/178 of 1 Aug. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> On the real invasion hysteria that had built up in Germany since early 1944 see Salewski, 'Abwehr der Invasion'.

<sup>24</sup> BA NS 1/414; NS 6/351, 790, and BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 703.

<sup>25</sup> Bormann circular 106/44 g of 11 May 1944, StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/80. On this see the Meyer circular of 12 May 1944, in *Ursachen und Folgen*, xxi. 21, 250-2, and APO, Kreisleitung Schröttersburg der NSDAP/64.

<sup>26</sup> Bormann circular 124/44 g.Rs. of 31 May 1944, KTB OKW, iv/2. 1565-8.

At 1242h on 20 July 1944 a bomb, intended for Hitler himself, exploded during a military situation conference in the *Wolfsschanze* (the Führer's 'Wolf's Lair' headquarters near Rastenburg in eastern Prussia). The assassination attempt by Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, at the time chief of staff to the commander of the replacement army, was to open up the way to a fundamental reordering of political relationships within the Reich.<sup>27</sup> On the use of 'executive power', Stauffenberg and his fellow-conspirators had planned to prohibit all activity by the office-holders of the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations, and at the same time to confiscate the Party's entire assets.<sup>28</sup> Only a few hours after the failed attempt on 20 July the head of the Party chancellery gave the first signs of life, sending a total of five telexes to the Gauleiters to tell them who had been involved in the attempted coup and to drum into them that they must 'in all circumstances keep firm control over their Gaue'.<sup>29</sup> Thereupon the Party in several Gaue arranged rallies to express loyalty to Hitler.<sup>30</sup> Bormann and the RSHA applied all their energy to smashing the 20 July 'conspirators' clique'. Over the next few weeks the head of the Party chancellery, on Hitler's express order, saw to it that in future no department of the military would be able to acquire executive power. This applied both to a case of civil unrest and to a spread of military operations to the territory of the Reich.<sup>31</sup>

Already the day before the unexpected assassination attempt on 20 July the Party chancellery had, in view of the difficult military manpower situation, announced further redundancies in the NSDAP.<sup>32</sup> Only a few hours later Hitler empowered the head of the Party chancellery to introduce 'total war deployment' into the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations, and to shut down all offices that were of lesser importance to the war effort.<sup>33</sup> Compared to the situation in the spring of 1943, the close-downs that now occurred within the Party were clearly different. This time it was not a matter of making manpower from the Party's staff available to the Wehrmacht or armaments industry; Bormann and the Party chancellery had far more

<sup>27</sup> On the lead-up to and events of 20 July 1944 see Hoffmann, *German Resistance*, (1979), and Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, and Winfried Heinemann in the present volume.

<sup>28</sup> Erich Hoepfner, *Standrechtsverordnung No. 3* of 20 July 1944, BA-MA RH 14/5, 15-16, taking as its basis 'Operation WALKÜRE' which covered the use of the army to put down internal unrest; see Ueberschär, 'Umsturzplan'.

<sup>29</sup> Repr. in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 591-3, here 591 (quotation from RS 1). At length on Bormann's reaction to 20 July 1944 see Lang, *Bormann*, 262-72.

<sup>30</sup> See documents in Wippermann, *Leben in Frankfurt*, iii. 163-6. These Party loyalty rallies do not appear to have been a Reich-wide campaign. On the public mood after 20 July 1944 in general see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 215-19.

<sup>31</sup> Laid down in a Führer decree signed by Hitler, Lammers, and Keitel (20 Sept. 1944), in *Führer-Erlasse*, 456. On its genesis see Bormann's minute (30 July 1944), in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 600; BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 703, and *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 20707-19 [17882], and BA R 43 II/1213 a.

<sup>32</sup> Bormann to all RLs and GLs (19 July 1944), and BA NS 1/302.

<sup>33</sup> Hitler order 10/44 of 20 July 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 1. Bormann had obviously asked Hitler for this before the assassination attempt, and subsequently dated it 20 July.

in mind a major decentralization of the full-time political leaders from the Reich executive into the NSDAP districts.<sup>34</sup> As a result a great many posts were very quickly axed in the Rosenberg office, the Reich youth leadership, and the main office for technology,<sup>35</sup> and even the DAF and Reich organizational leadership were not spared.<sup>36</sup> Many official Party newspapers were shut down for the time being.<sup>37</sup> Deployment of the staff thus released was handled centrally by the Party chancellery, which issued 'war deployment orders' and posted the political leaders to Kreis offices in which the need for personnel arose.<sup>38</sup> It is not entirely clear how many Party officials and staff were moved from the Reich executive to the regions in this way;<sup>39</sup> but of the just on 10,000 full-time staff the Reich executive had at this time it cannot have been more than 1,000.

Meanwhile, units of the Allied troops in northern France had on 25 July 1944 broken through the German defences at Avranches, and by early September, after a costly campaign of rapid movement, come to a halt close to Aachen on the very borders of the Reich. The Reich defence commissioner for military district VI, Josef Grohé, and the military district VI command had since the middle of August been preparing a withdrawal from the areas under threat from the Allies.<sup>40</sup> On 4 September Eupen-Malmedy (which had been separated from Belgium after the campaign in the west in May 1940, and annexed) had already been vacated, without even consulting Hitler. Bormann was on the same day still making the point that only 'from a central position could it be seen' which territory should be evacuated at an early stage, and that 'the Führer [had] reserved the decision to himself in all cases'.<sup>41</sup> Grohé immediately asked Hitler to be allowed to vacate the districts of Aachen-Stadt, Aachen-Land, Monschau, Erkelenz, and Geilenkirchen. Once Hitler had approved this, the NSV evacuated a total of 300,000 persons within a

<sup>34</sup> This is evident from a minute by Zander (1 Aug. 1944), BA NS 6/321, 334-5, and a note by Gerhard Utikal, chief of staff in Rosenberg's office, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 04122-31 [28200], and BA NS 8/191. Treated fully in Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 496-7.

<sup>35</sup> Bormann to Rosenberg (19 July 1944), BA NS 6/167, 95; Bormann to Rosenberg (1 Sept. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 126 04200-1 [28200], and BA NS 8/191; PK, V. I. 29/274 of 1 Dec. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 68, and *Deutsche Jugend*, 390-1.

<sup>36</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 08562-65 [28208], and BA NS 22/978; *ibid.*, fiches 117 08534-37 [28230], and BA NS 22/978; DAF contribution to the call-up, Ley order 30/44 of 23 Aug. 1944, *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt*, 10 (1944) 4, 54-5; redundancies in the KdF, Ley order 36/44 of 19 Sept. 1944, *ibid.* 57-8.

<sup>37</sup> BA NS 1/302.

<sup>38</sup> Bormann order 180/44 of 14 Aug. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 30-1. Implemented through the PK's deployment order (13 Oct. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 307 00002 [27757], and BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Peter Abberger.

<sup>39</sup> A press release listed only the posts suppressed within the Party, see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 11059/1-71 [18054], and BA R 43 II/666 b.

<sup>40</sup> What follows comes from the report by Grohé (28 Sept. 1944), BA R 58/976, 31-43. On the situation on the Reich's western border see Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 122-47.

<sup>41</sup> Bormann telex to the Gauleiters die GL (5 Sept. 1944), BA R 1501/444, 44. On the German withdrawal from Eupen-Malmedy in general see Schärer, *Deutsche Annexionspolitik*, 51-5.

few days.<sup>42</sup> Since the autumn of 1944 evacuating parts of Germany had, on almost all fronts, become the Party's main task. It always followed the same pattern: the *Hoheitsträger* concerned called the Führer's headquarter and obtained Hitler's permission via Bormann; once this had been given, he set in train the extremely complex machinery for evacuating people, businesses, and industrial firms.<sup>43</sup>

During the military crisis that had begun in mid-July 1944 Bormann and the Party chancellery had been working to mobilize the political leaders and Party members for the defensive battle, bombarding them with more and more 'hold fast' slogans. On 15 September Bormann for instance ordered the Gauleiters 'to keep a steely calm, and display an unshakeable air of confidence'.<sup>44</sup> During an inspection of the Gaue in western Germany the Reich head of organization then noted that the conduct of the Gauleiters was just as Bormann wanted.<sup>45</sup> Goebbels took the same view, and felt that in the west the NSDAP was fully 'in control of the situation'.<sup>46</sup> In his New Year's message on 31 December 1944 the head of the Party chancellery made it clear that 'the Führer demands of every *Hoheitsträger* that in carrying out his leadership duties he constantly apply all his energies, day and night'.<sup>47</sup> At this stage Bormann still believed that the Party organization was working well, and that one could look to the future with confidence.<sup>48</sup> Matters changed only when, at the end of January 1945, the Ardennes offensive finally collapsed and on the eastern front Königsberg (Kaliningrad) was lost. Now the whole of the left bank of the Rhine and the industrial region of Upper Silesia were in danger of falling to the Allied armies. This led Hitler, on 30 January 1945—the twelfth anniversary of his seizing power—to appeal to the German population to arm themselves 'with an even greater and tougher spirit of resistance' and to join in the fight against 'Jewish-Asiatic Bolshevism'.<sup>49</sup> Bormann used this for a renewed call on the leadership of the Party; 'every individual must, in his post and to the best of his ability . . . using all means and with total dedication, organize the resistance'. The central task of the political leaders lay not so much in evacuation as in 'organizing

<sup>42</sup> Goebbels criticized the NSDAP for abandoning Aachen far too soon; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 13, 498 (17 Sept. 1944), and *ibid.* 561–2 (25 Sept. 1944).

<sup>43</sup> Guidelines for the evacuation, drafted by the PK and OKW, were issued on 14 Sept. 1944: see *Ursachen und Folgen*, xxi. 557–9. Regional examples of the procedure mentioned above can be found in LHA Koblenz, 662, 5/105; HStA Düsseldorf, RW 37/21; BA NS 26/260, and BA R 1501/2876.

<sup>44</sup> Bormann circular 242/44 of 15 Sept. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Paper by Ley (30 Nov. 1944), BA NS 6/135, 12–17. Only the Baden Gauleiter, Wagner, attracted his criticism, for having allowed Strasbourg to be vacated instead of taking weapon in hand to lead the defence himself. Against this Syré, 'Führer von Oberrhein', 769–72, shows that Wagner used terror tactics to encourage the home front to continue with the fight.

<sup>46</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 189 (10 Nov. 1944).

<sup>47</sup> Bormann circular 478/44 of 31 Dec. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 5.

<sup>48</sup> See letter from Bormann to his wife (5 Jan. 1945), in Bormann, *The Bormann Letters*, 160–1. In Gau Westfalen-Nord several PLs took the same view; see the New Year's letter from an OL to his KL superior (31 Dec. 1944), StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/109, and that from the Lippe KL to a KAL (18 Jan. 1945), Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 310.

<sup>49</sup> Radio broadcast, in Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2195–8, here 2195, 2197 (quotations).

mental and material resistance' by the population.<sup>50</sup> On 24 February 1945 the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters met Hitler to receive their instructions for the defensive battle ahead.<sup>51</sup> Following that, Bormann again telexed to the Gaue his own call to fight on. His final circular, on 15 April 1945, culminated in the demand that the political leaders should 'destroy all bridges' behind them so as to hinder the enemy.<sup>52</sup>

What effect did this 'fight on' propaganda from the head of the Party chancellery have on the more than a million Party officials and almost 9 million members of the NSDAP? Given the immensity of the Party organization and the endless variants of individual behaviour, it is impossible to give any single, straightforward answer. It would certainly be unfair to dismiss his appeal as empty phrases that, given the military situation, went unheeded among the lower levels of the Party. Up to the present day historical studies on the final phase of the Second World War hold stubbornly to the line that the NSDAP fell apart in late 1944/early 1945 because its officials cleared out early on and shamefully left the population in the lurch.<sup>53</sup> There were undoubtedly many Party officials who in the final weeks of the Nazi regime did not live up to the expectations of the Party leadership. The Party chancellery was, for instance, making lists of Kreis leaders and local branch leaders alleged to have made off well before their town or area was captured by Allied troops, and taking note of Gau office heads who were not carrying out their superiors' orders.<sup>54</sup> Goebbels was continually filling the pages of his diary with fresh horrified reports of the 'defeatism' in the Party.<sup>55</sup> If one looks at these cases more closely, it seems that the situation was a good deal less dramatic; one rapporteur, for example, complained that a Kreisleiter was being 'arrogant' and grouching to other political leaders.<sup>56</sup> Or there was Goebbels criticizing Arthur Greiser, the Gauleiter of the Wartheland, for having misled Hitler into giving approval for evacuating Posen (Poznań) when this was not at all necessary as the Red Army was still 20 kilometres from the city at the time.<sup>57</sup> The defeatism that Goebbels and the

<sup>50</sup> Bormann circular 43/45 of 30 Jan. 1945, BA NS 6/353, 15. On this Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv, 290 (1 Feb. 1945).

<sup>51</sup> On this meeting see Moll, 'Steuerungsinstrument', 268–9. On the radio Hermann Esser, one of the earliest members of the Party, read out a proclamation on the anniversary of the Party's foundation; see Domarus, *Reden*, ii, 2203–6. The text came from Esser himself, and was merely revised by Hitler; see Bormann to Esser (24 Feb. 1945), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. I, fiches 307 01253–4 [28604], and BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Hermann Esser.

<sup>52</sup> Bormann circular 211/45 of 15 Apr. 1945, BA NS 6/353, 103.

<sup>53</sup> As for instance Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 812–44, here 831, saying: 'Desertion by the NSDAP's political leaders in the American occupation zone was a mass phenomenon.' Similarly Orlow, *History of the Nazi Party*, ii, 481–4, and Pätzold and Weißbecker, *Geschichte der NSDAP*, 502–4.

<sup>54</sup> BA NS 6/51, 788.  
<sup>55</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv, 15, 553 (21 Mar. 1945); *ibid.* 603–4 (27 Mar. 1945); *ibid.* 653661 (1 Apr. 1945), and *ibid.* 672 (4 Apr. 1945).

<sup>56</sup> Report from Pg Lichtenberg on the conduct of the KL in Upper Silesia (22 Mar. 1945), IfZ, Fa 91/1.

<sup>57</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv, 205 (24 Jan. 1945). Goebbels's invective against Greiser triggered investigations by the Party chancellery into 'defeatist' PLs from the Warthegau: BA NS 1/432. On this in general see the list of sources in Rogall, *Räumung*, 16–26.



Party chancellery thought they could see in the NSDAP in the final weeks of the war had not a lot to do with political leaders having suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth; it was far more a matter of having their expectations dashed that the Party members on the ground would help keep the Allied forces at bay. It reflected, more than anything, the illusion still entertained by those at the top of the Party that the war could be won, if not militarily then by whipping up ideological fanaticism.

It can be shown that in 1944/5 the vast majority of the Party's political leaders remained in place at least as long as the military situation allowed. Basically, they did carry out all the tasks the Party leadership gave them to do. Moreover, not a few officials committed 'final-phase crimes'; these crimes of violence, mainly by the Gestapo and Kripo although military units and individual soldiers did also take part, were directed against forced labourers, prisoners of war, prison inmates, 'asocial elements', the war-weary population, and even against Party members and political leaders who had been branded as 'traitors to the nation'. Kreisleiters and local branch leaders did not shy from murdering members of the NSDAP or its divisions who had shown themselves as being 'too weak'.<sup>58</sup> The Kreisleiter of Braunschweig arranged for one chief administrative officer who, faced with the prospect of defeat, had cut his wrists to be given medical care before then letting him be shot for defeatism by the Party's Kreis secretary.<sup>59</sup> The Kreisleiters of Deggendorf and Schwäbisch-Gmund and several other NSDAP Kreis office heads quickly murdered a number of political prisoners and then decamped.<sup>60</sup> On 27 March 1945, two days before the town was surrendered to the Americans, the Kreisleiter of Wetzlar had a defeatist who had put out a sign with the words 'welcome to our liberators' hanged.<sup>61</sup> The list could be added to almost at will. As the war moved to its close, the NSDAP indulged itself in bloody repression, and outright terror.

## 2. THE NSDAP'S INVOLVEMENT IN ARMAMENTS, AND THE REICH PLENIPOTENTIARY FOR TOTAL MOBILIZATION

Alongside the strategies for mobilizing the Party itself, which were stepped up after the Italian crisis in the summer of 1943, the NSDAP tried during the last two years of the war to acquire greater influence over the economy of the Nazi state.<sup>62</sup> The major feature of the industrial structure of the Third Reich, as this developed in the course of the Second World War, was that

<sup>58</sup> *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*, i. 381-98, case No. 018; *ibid.* 399-409, case No. 019, and *iii.* 37-46, case No. 076. Also Paul, 'Diese Erschießungen'.

<sup>59</sup> *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*, i. 431-68, case No. 021.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 751-87, case No. 034, and *ibid.* ii. 75-101, case No. 038.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 103-32, case No. 039.

<sup>62</sup> The relationship between the NSDAP and the Nazi economy during the war has not yet been the subject of systematic study. In particular there have been no studies of the influence of Party on commerce and the arms industry, in respect of either the individual factory workforces or the



the Reich ministry for armaments and war production (*Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion*, RMfRuKp) progressed by the late summer of 1943 to being the central controlling body. After he took office early in 1942, the arms minister Albert Speer managed to concentrate the war industry's output planning, raw materials procurement, and production control more and more within his own ministry.<sup>63</sup> Essentially, this held the reins of both the end-production of armaments and the logistics of the industrial economy.<sup>64</sup> The OKW's war economy and armaments department had been broken up, and the Reich economics ministry edged out of exerting control over the war industry. The Four-Year Plan authority still existed only in the form of Central Planning, which was dominated by Speer as Göring's general plenipotentiary for the armaments industry, and of Sauckel's GBA office, probably the only economic body that had still escaped the armaments ministry's grasp.<sup>65</sup> Basically, Speer could regard himself as the unfettered dictator of the economy, who also controlled the arms concerns through a system of 'rings' and committees. Never before had anyone in the Third Reich assembled so much economic power in one pair of hands.

In parallel with the centralization of control over armaments by Speer and the armaments ministry, the production of armaments had also undergone an enormous upsurge in 1942 and 1943. Over this period the figures for the end-production of armaments had risen almost exponentially, and the number of aircraft and tanks built had more than trebled.<sup>66</sup> It was this 'armaments miracle' that was responsible for the Nazi leadership, despite all the military setbacks and even after the Italian crisis, showing an unshakeable will to triumph. Hitler and virtually all the top Nazi officials believed Speer's promises that arms production could rise further still, and were ready to hand over even more powers to the armaments minister to make this possible. Yet Speer's demand for sole control of the war economy was far from having support in all quarters. The greatest aversion to the armaments ministry developed in the Party chancellery and among the Party's Gauleiters and Gau economic advisers. The cause for conflict that had built up between the armaments ministry and the NSDAP since 1943 was above all the question of how far-reaching the conversion of peacetime production to that of armaments was to be. During the management and control levels. Only the 'deployment of labour' can be seen as well researched; see Peter, *Rüstungspolitik in Baden*, 197–362. The best study of the DAF's 'factory policy' to date is that by Werner, 'Bleib übrig'. The basic work on the SS economy is Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit*.

<sup>63</sup> This development is covered at length in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 295–436.

<sup>64</sup> On the relationship between the industrial economy and the RMfRuKp during the war see Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer*, 101–7; Peter, *Rüstungspolitik in Baden*, 261–70, and Lorentz, *Industrielite*, 284–347. Also Georg Wagner-Kyora in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>65</sup> The GBA is treated fully in Naasner, *Neue Machtzentren*, 25–162. From mid-1943 there were repeated conflicts between the GBA and RMfRuKp over the recruitment of forced labourers from the occupied territories; see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 960–97.

<sup>66</sup> See the second chapter of Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*, iii. 79–222, esp. 80, 85, tables 11, 13, and the scarcely analytical account in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 584–747.

suppression of posts that had gone on in the economy after Hitler's decree of 13 January 1943 the Gauleiters and Gau economic advisers had largely spared the commercial side of industry, and had not made the move to 'total war' that Speer and Goebbels, for instance, had envisaged.<sup>67</sup> Certainly the regional Party offices shared the view that arms production should be increased; yet they wanted at the same time to keep up the previous standard of living on the home front, so as not to have to accept a worsening of the public mood as the price for it. Instead, the Gauleiters and their economic advisers argued for manpower savings in the armaments firms.<sup>68</sup>

Speer tried to defuse the conflict of aims between a full-scale conversion of the Nazi economy to arms production and the preservation of the consumer-goods industry by following a twofold strategy. On the one hand he canvassed for a move to total war on the home front, in which the Nazi regime would have to throw overboard all its earlier concern for the needs of the public.<sup>69</sup> And on the other he worked to involve the NSDAP in armaments, that is to say he wanted to annex the Party's regional economic bodies and have them follow orders from his ministry. He had had an initial, partial success on 17 September 1942 when twenty-six regional armaments commissions were set up, to control all armaments agencies and cooperate with the factories.<sup>70</sup> After the Second World War Speer managed to represent this strategy of bringing the NSDAP into the armaments effort as having been his personal resistance campaign against radical forces in the Party. As things were in 1943/4, the situation was rather the reverse: some quarters in the NSDAP balked at a radical shift to total war on the home front, and Speer joined forces with propaganda minister Goebbels to overcome this resistance. The armaments minister did not hesitate to make an unmistakable threat to the Gauleiters,

<sup>67</sup> BA NS 6/525; Emil Stürtz, GL of Mark Brandenburg, to Lammers (5 May 1943), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 107688–92 [16765], and BA R 43 II/662; *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 5307–9 (30 May 1943), and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vii. 430–1 (27 Feb. 1943). Accounts in Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 278–85; Peter, *Rüstungspolitik in Baden*, 250–69, and Rebentisch, *Führerstaat*, 488–98.

<sup>68</sup> This can be seen from the debate that went on in the Party chancellery in the spring of 1943 on the NSDAP being involved in checking the granting of reserved-occupation status. The PK criticized the fact that the OKW's 800,000-man programme had not been met because Speer had managed to protect the workers in the arms industry who were supposed to have been given up to the Wehrmacht; see presentation by Otto Iffland for Bormann (26 May 1943), BA NS 6/780, 105–17, here 105–6, and Nolzen, 'Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation', 75–6.

<sup>69</sup> Besides a conversion of civilian production to the manufacture of arms, Speer called for example for the compulsory evacuation of the public from the Ruhr, for the introduction of armaments service conscription of every man and woman between the ages of 16 and 65, and for the fullest possible use of concentration-camp inmates in the armaments works. See Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit*, 379–437, esp. 398, 400–3, 409–11.

<sup>70</sup> Bormann circular 195/42 of 11 Dec. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, ii. 498–9. Together with many other bodies the GWB and Gau administrators of the DAF were represented in these armaments commissions. On Speer's strategy of bringing the NSDAP into the armaments effort, which formed part of his attempt to achieve an amalgamation of the *Mittelinstanz*, see the address to the GWB, Gau administrators, and Gau office heads for technology (18 Apr. 1942), BA R 3/1547, 103–29, and Janssen, *Ministerium Speer*, 157–76, esp. 166–8.

at a meeting with them in Poznań on 6 October 1943, that he would instigate police measures against them should they oppose the transfer he planned of a million workers from civilian manufacture to the armaments industry.<sup>71</sup> Such remarks did nothing to help promote mutual trust between the minister and the Party; and Speer's attempt to have the Gauleiters, as Reich defence commissioners, made answerable to his ministry was doomed to failure.<sup>72</sup> On 4 January 1944, after the winter of 1943 had seen the situation with replacing losses in the Wehrmacht become even worse, and the number of those working in war industry look as if it was going to fall, a comprehensive programme to recruit more workers was decided on. Hitler now demanded of Sauckel that he squeeze out of the occupied territories more than 4 million workers, of whom 1.3 million were destined solely for the armaments industry.<sup>73</sup> Speer made moves to protect all armaments works in the occupied territories from having workers taken from them by Sauckel, which prompted one of the Reich chancellery staff to comment that Speer ought just once to agree 'to have the sector he was in charge of checked by a third party to see if it was not overpopulated'.<sup>74</sup> The same view took hold in the Party chancellery and the OKW: at the end of May 1944 Keitel approached the Party chancellery and proposed the setting up of Gau committees under NSDAP control to examine grants of reserved-occupation status in the internal administration, the Wehrmacht, and the armaments industry.<sup>75</sup> Against advice from some of his staff in the Party chancellery who had already drafted a Führer decree, and against the wishes of many Gauleiters, Bormann rejected Keitel's suggestion because the Party organization could not take on any executive tasks.

Meanwhile Goebbels and Speer pursued their own plans for bringing the home front too to a 'total war' state. On 12 July 1944 the armaments minister, in a memorandum to Hitler, called for 'the enrolling of the whole of the German *Volk* for our struggle'.<sup>76</sup> A few days later Goebbels backed him up, and in a long memorandum to Hitler set out how final victory could still be attained. Goebbels asked for fresh powers in order to 'change the peacetime conditions that still partially prevail to the real conditions of a war'.<sup>77</sup> In his view these powers as the 'implementing body' should be given to the NSDAP, since 'it alone [had] the initiative and gift for improvisation needed for such

<sup>71</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 69–71 (7 Oct. 1943); Speer, *Third Reich*, 312, and Moll, 'Steuerungsinstrument', 255–7.

<sup>72</sup> Speer: Führer briefing No. 1 (25 Jan. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00405–12 [17459], BA R 3/1614, and 'Chronik der Dienststellen des Reichsministers Albert Speer 1944', *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00551–2 [17477], BA R 3/1739.

<sup>73</sup> See minutes by Lammers (4 Jan. 1944), IMT, xxvii. 104–7 doc. 1292-PS, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 958–81, here 967–73.

<sup>74</sup> Note by Leo Killy, working in the RK (17 Apr. 1944), BA R 43 II/651, 13–15, here 15 (quotation), and Rebertisch, *Führerstaat*, 513–14.

<sup>75</sup> Paper by Zander for Bormann (8 June 1944), BA NS 6/780, 29–33.

<sup>76</sup> Repr. in Bleyer, 'Pläne', 1317ff., here 1319–20 (quotation). On this and what follows see the study by Hancock, *National Socialist Leadership*, 105–45.

<sup>77</sup> Goebbels memo (18 July 1944), Longerich, 'Joseph Goebbels', 305–14, here 307 (quotations).

an immense process of extracting resources to the full'. By bringing total war into effect, the Party was thus to be brought into the executive, something that Bormann had so far always resisted.

After the 20 July attempt on Hitler's life, however, the head of the Party chancellery had to admit defeat, since now nothing stood in the way of the war becoming the total one Goebbels and Speer were pressing for. On 25 July 1944 Hitler appointed Goebbels as Reich plenipotentiary for total mobilization of resources for war (*Reichsbevollmächtigter für den total Kriegseinsatz*, RBK). His task would be 'to survey the entire state system, including the Reich railways, postal services, and all public institutions, establishments, and concerns, for the purpose of releasing, through constant and rational deployment of human and material resources, through the closing down of or restrictions on work less important to the war effort . . . the greatest possible supply of manpower for the Wehrmacht and armaments industry'.<sup>78</sup> This meant two things: first, Goebbels was going to carry out closures in all branches of public life and move the personnel thus made available into the armaments industry. And secondly, he was now going to review all applications for reserved-occupation status from the internal administration and armaments companies. The only exceptions were the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations, whose use of staff was managed by the head of the Party chancellery, and the personnel of the army, Waffen-SS, police, and Organisation Todt, the deployment of which was to be examined by the new commander of the replacement army, Himmler.<sup>79</sup> Goebbels, as total war plenipotentiary, could require information from the highest Reich authorities on all matters relating to total war deployment, and also issue instructions to them.

To tackle the task Goebbels set up a new authority consisting of a planning committee and an executive committee.<sup>80</sup> The planning committee was to gather from the public suggestions on areas where reserved-occupation status might be rescinded and on which administrations or concerns might be closed down, while the executive committee would put the proposals into effect. At the head of this was Goebbels, who invariably told Hitler of any closure he had in mind and had every single measure approved by the Führer personally.<sup>81</sup> In the *Mittelinstanz* (the regional layer of administration, at Gau

<sup>78</sup> *RGBL*, I, 1944, 161–2. On the genesis of the Führer decree see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 10885–92/7 [17798] and BA R 43 II/664 a, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 150–7 (24 July 1944).

<sup>79</sup> Hitler's order of 2 Aug. 1944, in *Führer-Erlasse*, 437–9. Himmler's role as chief of the replacement army has so far had hardly any study, since the relevant files are no longer kept; see the collection of orders by BdE Himmler, BA-MA RH 14/50. He had handed the official duties over to his confidant Hans Jüttner; see Schulte, 'Hans Jüttner', 285–6. The orders relating to Himmler's combing-out of the Wehrmacht can be found in Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 323–31.

<sup>80</sup> Lammers file note (2 Aug. 1944), BA BDC Partei-Correspondence Joseph Goebbels, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 180 (27 July 1944).

<sup>81</sup> Führer briefing (11 Aug. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 11029–54 [17883], and BA R 43 II/666 b. The activities of the RBK authorities are outlined in Krämer, *Vom Stab Heß*, 233–4.

level) Goebbels tried to make the Reich defence commissioners executive organs of the RBK, by giving them the right to collect from administrative authorities and individual armaments companies details of their reserved-occupation staff.<sup>82</sup> Bormann however complained that an arrangement like this was not enough; instead, the Reich defence commissioners should have a right to give instructions, so that they could in fact get the necessary measures put into effect in the *Mittelinstanz*. The 'order on the implementation of total war', enacted by Goebbels and Bormann on 16 August 1944, took this complaint very largely into account.<sup>83</sup> Under this, the Reich defence commissioners were to be in charge of total war deployment in the *Mittelinstanz* in accordance with guidelines from the higher Reich authorities, who in turn would receive directives from the RBK. The actual measures were (and this was meeting a proposal by the Party chancellery) to be carried out by Gau and Kreis committees, chaired by the Gauleiters and Kreisleiters. Bormann was thereby abandoning his earlier objections to the NSDAP being made part of the executive.

It is interesting to look at what powers the Gau and Kreis committees had in implementing total war deployment, and how the closures and cancelling of reserved-occupation status were carried out at regional level. The Gau committees consisted of representatives from the Reich defence commissioner's executive authorities, the army recruitment inspectorates, the Gau labour offices, the armaments committees as subsidiary organs of the ministry for armaments and war production, and other 'suitable persons' from the Party and government.<sup>84</sup> Their task was to put into effect locally the closures allotted to them by the RBK executive committee, to check on grants of reserved-occupation status covering several of the Party's Kreise, and to deal with cases of dispute arising in the Kreis committees. A Kreis committee, the chair of which was always appointed by the relevant Gauleiter, included—as well as the Kreisleiter—the Landrat (chief administrative officer), the commander of the military district, the head of the labour office, the Oberbürgermeister, and the DAF Kreiswalter.<sup>85</sup> These were the organs who had to put total war deployment into effect in industrial and business concerns. To this end they gathered from the public suggestions relating to individual firms, and could

<sup>82</sup> Goebbels, undated draft of a circular to the RVK, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 101 10966 [17872], and BA R 43 II/666 a; Bormann telex to Goebbels (8 Aug. 1944), *ibid.* 101 10971–2, and the account in Rebenisch, *Führerstaat*, 518–19.

<sup>83</sup> Order by Bormann and Goebbels of 16 Aug. 1944, BA R 1501/1278, 35–7. See Bormann telex to Goebbels (14 Aug. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 10914–15 [17901], BA R 43 II/665, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 251–2 (17 Aug. 1944).

<sup>84</sup> On the Gau committees see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 101 09746 [17887] and BA R 43 II/656 a, and Speer to Bormann (11 Sept. 1944), BA R 3/1615, 102.

<sup>85</sup> On the composition of Kreis committees for total war deployment see HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/87; StA Detmold, L 113/97, and StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Nord, Hauptleitung/23. In practice Gauleiters delegated the running of the committees only to Kreisleiters, although they could also have appointed other persons: BA R 1501/2007. On the role of the KLs in total war deployment see the brief treatment in Roth, *Parteikreis*, 323, and Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 121–5.

deal with these without having to refer back to the RBK authorities;<sup>86</sup> the Kreis committees then tried to induce the head of the firm in question to implement the proposals.

The most important task for these committees was checking on grants of reserved-occupation status in the arms factories. The Kreisleiter, DAF Kreiswalter, and military district commander came to agreement on a certain quota of these that were to be rescinded in each armaments concern.<sup>87</sup> The Kreisleiters then contacted the heads of these firms, requiring them to release the workers for Wehrmacht service and disallowing any further renewals of their reserved-occupation status. When the firms had put their demand into effect, the Kreisleiters passed details of the persons concerned to the regional military headquarters, so the latter could post them to the armed forces.<sup>88</sup>

In doing this the Kreisleiters and military district commanders were bypassing the armaments inspectorates as Speer's supervisory bodies in the military districts, which had so far always firmly resisted any release of manpower from the arms factories.<sup>89</sup> This move to gain a march on the armaments ministry where reserved occupations were concerned was the result of a power-sharing compromise between the Party and the Wehrmacht. As Germany's preparations for repelling the Allied invasion continued flat-out, the Party chancellery and OKW were united on solving the forces' manpower replacement problem by bleeding, in the arms factories, the employers who were making the greatest number of applications for reserved-occupation status for their employees.<sup>90</sup> This was thus a concerted attempt by the NSDAP and Wehrmacht to push through their manpower demands on Speer.

Anyone believing that this move, with the RBK campaign and the Kreis committees' own activities, would succeed was reckoning without Speer. He moved heaven and earth to shield arms factories from having to surrender any more staff. He stressed repeatedly that breakdowns in production were to be expected if the Kreis committees continued to put those running the factories under pressure and forced them to hand over their workers.<sup>91</sup> The minister argued for the factory managers themselves deciding how many of their

<sup>86</sup> Suggestions were to be sent to military postal code 08000 locally, see Fritz Schlessmann, Stv. GL Essen, to all KLs (7 Sept. 1944), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/87. This was also announced to the general public; see StadtA Dortmund, 424/50, 1. On this also Rebentisch, *Führerstaat*, 518 n. 57.

<sup>87</sup> Speer to Goebbels (28 Aug. 1944), BA R 3/1615, 30-1. These quotas were to be arrived at in accordance with guidelines from the RBK; see Goebbels, Führer briefing A I 462 (9 Aug. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 11008-28 [17876] and BA R 43 II/666 b, and Goebbels circular of 17 Aug. 1944, BA R 3/1615, 17-19.

<sup>88</sup> Goebbels however complained that the regional offices were not passing on workers who had been released for service quickly enough; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 582 (28 Sept. 1944).

<sup>89</sup> On the armaments inspectorates see Umbreit, 'Sonderformen', and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 307-14.

<sup>90</sup> See file note by Friedrich for Bormann (29 June 1944), BA NS 6/780, 17-18.

<sup>91</sup> See telephone conversation between Speer and one of the RBK officials (1 Sept. 1944), BA R 3/1615, 47-52, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 395-6 (3 Sept. 1944). On the clashes between Speer and Goebbels see Hancock, *National Socialist Leadership*, 147-71.



workers could be released to the Wehrmacht. By then the armaments manufacturers had already lost 150,000 of their men who were capable of bearing arms.<sup>92</sup> For the future, Speer, Goebbels, and Bormann came to agreement that the Gauleiters would 'go through again' cases where 'essential workers' had been lost to conscription, and that replacement workers for the arms industry must be provided even more speedily.<sup>93</sup> At this stage Hitler's motto 'More soldiers *and* more weapons' guided what was done only to the extent that the head of the Party chancellery, too, believed in it.

In early October 1944 the arms industry was finally hit by fresh losses of manpower. Speer, who estimated the capacity of his factories to give up workers to the army, Luftwaffe, or navy at 40,000 men fit for military service at the very most, was this time put in his place by Keitel and Bormann. After a joint presentation by the heads of the Party chancellery and OKW, Hitler ordered that 60,000 men from the arms industry should be drafted into the Wehrmacht.<sup>94</sup> Between January and March 1945, 80,000 men fit for military service were drained from the armaments workforce and Speer, who had again put up a vehement defence, suffered a fresh defeat at the hands of Goebbels, Keitel, and Bormann.<sup>95</sup> In the closing months of the Third Reich the primacy of the armaments effort that had held since the summer of 1944 crumbled through the move to supply more soldiers to the fighting front. It was to be up to the Party, as the Nazi regime's driving force, to see that the Wehrmacht got the men it needed to defend the German Reich from the Allied troops threatening it. The conflict in aims, between the Wehrmacht's need for replacement troops and the increase in arms production Speer was asking for, was settled in favour of the military. Between 1943 and 1945, more than 3.5 million soldiers were called into the Wehrmacht.<sup>96</sup> Of these under a third—almost a million—came from year groups that had not up to then been conscripted.<sup>97</sup> The other 2.5 million soldiers must have come from those who had been in reserved occupations; more than a third of these had been made available through the RBK campaign alone.<sup>98</sup> The Party had taken a decisive share in mobilizing this manpower for the Wehrmacht.

<sup>92</sup> On Speer's objections see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00415–24 [17911] and BA R 3/1615. Some of this loss was replaced, through shutdowns in the business sector closures providing fresh manpower for armaments, through women being brought into armaments work, and through the forced labour of those of 'other races' to a hitherto unseen extent. There are, unfortunately, no statistics on the wartime workforce for the armaments industry in isolation; see the extensive tables in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 914–17.

<sup>93</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00434–37 [17911] and BA R 3/1615, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 437 (8 Sept. 1944).

<sup>94</sup> Speer telex to the Gauleiters (3 Oct. 1944), BA R 3/1615, 133.

<sup>95</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv. 55 (4 Jan. 1945); *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 466 (6 Jan. 1945).

<sup>96</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 333, table 72 a.

<sup>97</sup> Those born 1900 and earlier, and 1925 and later; see Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 284–8. The figure above results from subtracting these year groups from the total number of men enlisted in the period 1943–5; see Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 222, table 28.

<sup>98</sup> Up to the start of this campaign around 1.5m. grants of reserved-occupation status had been cancelled; see KTB OKW, iii/2. 1572.



Goebbels's appointment as Reich plenipotentiary for total mobilization of resources allowed the NSDAP for the first time to acquire far-reaching powers over the Nazi war economy. The Party's incursion into the politics of the economy was also a result of administrative practice in the Kreis committees. There, the Party organs (primarily the Kreisleiters, Kreis economic advisers, and DAF Kreiswalters) managed more and more to marginalize the other bodies, who for understandable reasons of self-interest were against the move to total war. It derived, too, from an alliance between the NSDAP and the Wehrmacht, one that stretched from the heart of the Nazi regime right out to the periphery and that in the final months of the war gave absolute priority to reinforcing the military. Against this there was hardly anything that even Speer, who otherwise had up to the end of 1944 enjoyed Hitler's full backing, could do. He had nonetheless got far enough with his strategy of involving the NSDAP in the armaments effort to have set up in each Gau in the summer of 1944 armaments subcommittees that answered to his own ministry.<sup>99</sup> His medium-term objective of incorporating the regional and local bodies of the Party into the armaments system was put to a severe test by the role they played in the combing-out of workers in the factories.

### 3. HOME GUARD FLAK, FORTIFICATION-BUILDING, AND THE *VOLKSSTURM*

The mobilizing of personnel for the front-line troops and for armaments production, which reached its peak with Goebbels's appointment as RBK in the summer of 1944, was not the only attempt at making fuller use of the manpower resources of the home front. Since the spring of 1942, at the initiative of the Reich aviation ministry, an ever-widening range of people had been enlisted into anti-aircraft defence. Göring and his staff had urged a wide measure of cooperation between the Luftwaffe and the NSDAP, and began by ensuring that the Party organization was involved in mobilizing manpower for the homeland flak system. After the air raid on Lübeck Hitler had, on 29 May 1942, ordered that the flak batteries should in future be manned by civilians as well. The new formations were given the name of *Heimatflak* (home guard flak), and were to be used for the defence of communities seen as at less risk of bomber attack.<sup>100</sup> The basis for enlistment in the *Heimatflak* was provided by an order of the ministerial council for defence of the Reich on short-term

<sup>99</sup> Bormann to Speer (27 June 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00619–20 [17759] and BA R 3/1768; Bormann circular 173/44 of 1 Aug. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 145–8, and Speer to Schlessmann (2 Aug. 1944), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/87. In East Prussia Speer even made the Gauleiter, Erich Koch, chair of the armaments subcommittee; see Speer to Koch (8 Jan. 1945), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 108 00285 [18264] and BA R 3/1587.

<sup>100</sup> Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, 156–7 (29 Mar. 1942); Bormann order 13/42 g.Rs. of 30 Mar. 1942, BA NS 6/339, 280–282; Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 12–15, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 891–2.

military service in the Luftwaffe.<sup>101</sup> Under this, someone liable to military service who had not yet been called up could for a limited period be drafted into service in the home guard flak batteries. This applied to those born after 1894, including men liable for military service but in reserved occupations.<sup>102</sup> Early in December 1942 the Party chancellery and aviation ministry finally obtained an order from Hitler under which the Party was 'in every respect to facilitate the Luftwaffe's meeting the need for personnel for the *Heimatflak* batteries'.<sup>103</sup> In reality this meant that from now on the NSDAP was recruiting the personnel to serve the anti-aircraft guns.

Over the following weeks and months an intensive division of labour took place between the Party organization and the Luftwaffe on providing personnel for the flak batteries. The Luftgau headquarters set a certain quota that the Kreis- and local branch leaders were to find for manning the *Heimatflak* batteries.<sup>104</sup> The Party's *Hoheitsträger*s then went through their index cards, noting which males in their area were in line for short-term service with the Luftwaffe. Their details were passed to the relevant recruiting authorities, who in turn initiated their call-up. It was however found that this procedure caused all kinds of problems; many of the men earmarked for the *Heimatflak* by the NSDAP were already working for the SRD or for the RLB on civilian ARP, or had been claimed by other bodies.<sup>105</sup> Moreover the Kreisleiter and the local branch leaders needed to be careful not to nominate too many of those belonging to the Party or its divisions and affiliated organizations for such service with the Luftwaffe, if they were not ready to accept less work being done for the Party.<sup>106</sup> To this extent the NSDAP managed only an unsatisfactory response to meeting the Luftwaffe quotas. The Party chancellery officials aimed to solve the problem by drafting a 'Führer decree on the organization and direction of extra-occupational deployment'.<sup>107</sup> This provided that all

<sup>101</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1942, 280. This order stemmed from the RLM initiative; see letter by Hermann Pässe, intermediary between the Party chancellery and the OKW, to an OL (22 June 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 541 00015 [15734], and StA Würzburg, NSDAP-Gauleitung Mainfranken I/4.

<sup>102</sup> OKW/AHA/Ag/E(Ia) No. 6257/42, sgd. Keitel (20 Oct. 1942), Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi, 310–11.

<sup>103</sup> Hitler's order 23/42 of 2 Dec. 1942, BA NS 6/338, 333–5, in *Führer-Erlasse*, 301–2.

<sup>104</sup> On what follows see Bormann order 91/42 of 29 Dec. 1942, in *Verfügungen*, iii, 289–90. Report by GL Sachsen to the PK (10 Sept. 1943), BA NS 6/66, 124–5; HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/27054; LHA Koblenz, 662, 3/255; StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/93, and StadtA Duisburg, 103/1537. This procedure was distinct from the recruitment of Luftwaffe auxiliaries, which went on from January 1943 but was something for the ministry of the interior and Orpo authorities; see the basic study on the subject by Nicolaisen, *Der Einsatz*, and Ralf Blank in the present volume.

<sup>105</sup> Briefing paper by Hermann Witt, official in the PK (24 Apr. 1943), BA NS 6/319, 24–34.

<sup>106</sup> On calling on political leaders for the *Heimatflak* see Bormann circular 166/42 of 24 Oct. 1942, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 08651–2 [26783] and BA NS 22/1018.

<sup>107</sup> BA NS 6/319, 21–2. The term 'extra-occupational deployment' meant only that what was involved was service for the defence of the Reich performed outside the man's actual occupational activity. This could mean time-limited deployment after which the person would return to his old workplace, but could also include service outside working hours.

*Volksgenossen* between the ages of 15 and 65 who were not enlisted for military service, active service, or in the police or RAD were to be registered by the NSDAP and made available for non-occupational deployment. The Party was thus to have exclusive claim on personnel remaining on the home front, and to make them available to appropriate users of manpower such as the Luftwaffe for flak duties, or the RLB for ARP work.

Since Reich-wide regulations on extra-occupational war service deployment were still lacking, the aviation ministry launched a fresh initiative in mid-July 1943 in order to get a grip on the manpower shortage in the Reich air defence's fixed units. Göring's staff now made efforts to bring in women as well, to work on the *Heimatflak*'s fire-control equipment and searchlights. Hitler, whose earlier objections to the militarization of women were slowly fading, made no demur;<sup>108</sup> on 17 July 1943, after a discussion with Bormann, Hans Jeschonnek, chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, and Göring's liaison officer at Führer HQ Karl Bodenschatz, the Führer gave his approval to the recruitment of women Luftwaffe auxiliaries for service with the *Heimatflak*. The Party chancellery head told his staff 'no longer to discuss . . . the deployment itself' since this had already been decided. They were instead to work out proposals on how the employment of women in the flak batteries was to be put into effect.<sup>109</sup> The Reich women's leader's office expressed readiness to nominate to the Luftgau HQs, by 10 October 1943, an initial 5,000 women from the ranks of the NSF who were suitable for this.<sup>110</sup> The Luftwaffe however needed something like 30,000 women, so it asked the Party chancellery if it might not be possible to run a public recruiting campaign to boost the numbers.<sup>111</sup> This was turned down by Bormann, saying that Hitler had forbidden any kind of public advertising for the Wehrmacht.<sup>112</sup> By 1 June 1944 there were in all, within the Greater German Reich, 510,000 men and women working as auxiliaries with the flak artillery.<sup>113</sup> Of these, 80,000 were men mobilized for the *Heimatflak* by the regional Party offices, and 10,000 were women flak auxiliaries provided by the NSF.<sup>114</sup> The women auxiliaries operated searchlights, predictor equipment, and radar sets in the fire-control units of heavy batteries.<sup>115</sup> The successive expansion of recruiting of women for the Luftwaffe, which went on

<sup>108</sup> The official line on the militarization of women, which was shared by the Wehrmacht, can be found in OKW/AWA/WV(I) No. 2680/42, sgd. Keitel (22 June 1942), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 107 00370-72 [15770], and BA NS 19alt/197. See Seidler, *Frauen*, 147-53.

<sup>109</sup> Bormann telex to Friedrichs (17 July 1943) BA NS 6/66, 13-15, here 15 (quotation), and comments in Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 83-5. There were clearly strong reservations in the PK about the involvement of women in the home guard flak being proposed by the RLM.

<sup>110</sup> Zander briefing paper for Bormann of 18 Aug. 1943, BA NS 6/318, 224, and Bormann circular 116/43 of 24 Aug. 1943, Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst*, 411.

<sup>111</sup> Zander paper (26 Nov. 1943), BA NS 6/318, 335-338. On the flak artillery in 1943/44 see *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 225.

<sup>112</sup> Zander paper (8 May 1944), BA NS 6/318, 483-4.

<sup>114</sup> The number of women flak auxiliaries is from Morgan, *Weiblicher Arbeitsdienst*, 423. On their political training see PK, V. I. 5/38 of 7 Mar. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vi. 311-14.

<sup>115</sup> Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 28.

from the summer of 1943, was only one part of the total mobilization of German society that the NSDAP and Wehrmacht sought to redouble in the final months of the war.

After the Allied invasion in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and with the Red Army offensive that was awaited on the eastern front, thought was already being given in the Party chancellery, OKW, and army general staff to how the NSDAP could be integrated into the defensive battle that was expected to begin on the Reich's eastern border. What was to be done about this was for Hitler himself to decide. Hardly had the Red Army gone onto the offensive before he gave the Gauleiter of East Prussia, Erich Koch, orders to build fortifications in front of the German border.<sup>116</sup> He was to make use of the whole East Prussian population for the task, if they were not engaged on other essential war work. Koch's first measures seem, however, to have been very unsystematic. He began, on 13 July 1943, by ordering the enlistment of all men aged between 15 and 65 living within the districts of Gumbinnen and Allenstein for trench-digging duties along the border.<sup>117</sup> The local branch leaders were to draw up lists showing all inhabitants liable to such duties.<sup>118</sup> On the basis of these the Party Kreisleiters ultimately took decisions on limited periods of conscription for constructing defences, based on the emergency service regulations.<sup>119</sup> To a large extent, however, this seems to have been restricted to members of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations (over whom there was in any case individual authority), prisoners of war, foreign labourers, and refugees from the occupied territories.<sup>120</sup> In mid-July 1944 the NSDAP shipped several thousand men, youths, foreign workers, and prisoners of war into Reichskommissariat Ostland (the Baltic countries) and the Białystok region where the lines of defence were to be set up. The NSV and NSF had charge of transporting and supplying them. The Party chancellery provided an armed contingent of political leaders to supervise the construction work and keep the workers 'of other races' under control.<sup>121</sup>

Koch's attempts at mobilization for building defences in East Prussia were accompanied by an unprecedented propaganda effort. The print media, most of all the Party organ *Völkischer Beobachter*, now rehashed the whole gamut of the Prussian wars of liberation of 1812/13, comparing Koch with Gen. Johann

<sup>116</sup> A Führer decree on this, of 22 June 1944, is mentioned in Bormann's order 190/44g. of 23 Aug. 1944, BA NS 6/351, 7-8, here 7.

<sup>117</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 103 (13 July 1944), and *Deutschland im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, vi. 233-5.

<sup>118</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6709 (29 Aug. 1944), and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 113 (14 July 1944).

<sup>119</sup> On the liability to emergency service see Göring's order (15 Oct. 1938), in *RGBl.* I, 1938, 1441-2, which laid down that in a public state of emergency all inhabitants of the Third Reich could be conscripted to carry out allotted duties, for a limited period.

<sup>120</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 115 (14 July 1944).

<sup>121</sup> See the unsigned note on the discussion between the Reich organization leader Dr Ley and Oberbefehlshaber Dr Friedrichs on Thursday, 10 Aug. 1944; *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 117 08562-65 [28208], and BA NS 22/978.

Graf Yorck von Wartenburg who in those days had won the Elbe crossing back from the French and was thus seen as one of freedom's heroes par excellence.<sup>122</sup> The slight drawback of the same Yorck von Wartenburg having on 30 December 1812 concluded on his own initiative the Convention of Taurögen that opened the way into East Prussia for the czar's army (precisely what was to be prevented in the summer of 1944!) no longer counted, nor did that of Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, one of his direct descendants, having been executed as one of the circle of conspirators around Stauffenberg. Instead there was acclaim for how Koch had been able in a very short time to mobilize thousands of men and have a 'people's work army' up and ready. All that had been made to glitter was not however gold—no use could be made of a large part of the workforce conscripted for emergency service, because there was a shortage of vehicles or there were no spades to dig with. And a number of firms, in order to maintain production, refused to hand over the quota demanded of them.<sup>123</sup> The efforts made to bring the Red Army to a halt with a system of defences conjured up out of thin air by a 'people's work army' looked like proving to be a propaganda man of straw.

And yet over the next few weeks Koch's project developed into a model for the massive system of fortifications organized in depth that the NSDAP and Wehrmacht were seeking to erect along the German borders and in advance defence lines in the conquered territories. The Wehrmacht and its various organs took on responsibility for the strategic siting of the defences.<sup>124</sup> The military agencies were to decide on their layout and direct the labour force, while the Party recruited the workers and had charge of the work on site itself. On 27 July 1944 an 'order for the expansion of the German eastern area' was issued, signed by Heinz Guderian, the new chief of the army general staff. This was accompanied by a map showing the line to be followed by the newly constructed 'East Wall'. Guderian also set out the tasks to be undertaken by the military authorities, in particular the general of sappers and fortresses (*General der Pioniere und Festungen*, GenPiuFest) and the battalions of army engineers.<sup>125</sup> Only a little later, in a priority letter from the ministry of the interior, it was laid down that the Reich defence commissioners were to take over the recruiting of the workforce and supervisors.<sup>126</sup> Against this Bormann instructed a month later that the construction of defences would 'be handled by the Gauleiters and not the Reich defence commissioners, i.e. by a man

<sup>122</sup> See the facsimile in Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 31. On the facts of this Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 320 (25 Aug. 1944).

<sup>123</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6721 (28 Oct. 1944). See contra Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 131 (16 July 1944), noting that the campaign had gone smoothly.

<sup>124</sup> For the division of responsibilities between the military district commander and the RVK/GL in building defences see Chef OKW/WFSSt/Qu. 2/Verw.1 No. 007515/44 g.Kdos., sgd. Keitel (19 July 1944), BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 703, 11–16, repr. in KTB OKW, iv/2. 1571.

<sup>125</sup> OKH/GenStdH/GendPiuFest/Op.Abt. I No. 440 425/44 g.Kdos. Chefs., sgd. Guderian (27 July 1944), BA NS 6/792, 17–20. On the authorities under the GendPiuFest, on which no research at all has yet been done, see Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer*, ii. 96.

<sup>126</sup> Priority letter from RMI to RVK (28 July 1944), BA NS 6/792, 21–2.

from the Party, not a man from the government'.<sup>127</sup> The whole building of defences, he said, was 'first and foremost a question of people management', and the NSDAP had to see to it that 'the whole *Volksgemeinschaft*, including the female population', should 'mentally and materially uphold the defence of their borders'. He linked in here with the programme of 'extra-occupational war service' that the Party chancellery had initiated in the middle of 1943. The Party now demanded access to the entire population between the ages of 15 and 65, to put them to work building defences.<sup>128</sup>

To the west of the Reich, too, the NSDAP was engaged on defence construction. When the western Allies, after the breakthrough at Avranches, looked like advancing to Germany's western border, Hitler reacted with his 'order on extension of the western defences', and ordered the building of a system of fortifications along the frontier of the Reich. This was to be done 'by means of a people's work levy'. In this he was copying Koch, mobilizing the population of the threatened Gaue in the west, via their national emergency service duty, for trench-digging work; he immediately charged the Gauleiters Josef Grohé, Gustav Simon, Josef Bürckel, and Robert Wagner with managing it.<sup>129</sup> Soon after this the Düsseldorf Gauleiter Friedrich Karl Florian, the deputy Gauleiter of Essen Fritz Schleßmann, and Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Reich commissioner for the occupied Netherlands were also brought into the fortification measures.<sup>130</sup> On 1 September 1944 Bormann obtained from Hitler the responsibility for coordinating construction of defences in the west under the Gauleiters.<sup>131</sup> Whereas on the eastern front the workers digging trenches were mostly employed in the Gau where they lived, those in the west were to be swapped between the various Gaue involved. The Party chancellery called for daily reports from the Gauleiters and their representatives on the progress of the work; these gave the number of workers employed, the length of tank ditches and fire trenches completed, and the amounts of earth moved.<sup>132</sup> There was basically the same division of responsibility between NSDAP and Wehrmacht as with the construction work on the east of the

<sup>127</sup> Bormann order 190/44 g. of 23 Aug. 1944, BA NS 6/351, 7–8, here 7 (quotations).

<sup>128</sup> For the building of defences in front of the Reich's eastern frontier, mostly on the territory of the annexed or occupied areas, this was accepted by the agencies concerned. Even in the Government-General the NSDAP prevailed in its demand to recruit a labour force for constructing fortifications, although the RVK Hans Frank had initially entrusted this to government agencies; see BA NS 6/457, and Nolzen, *Arbeitsbereiche der NSDAP*, 260–1.

<sup>129</sup> *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung*, 272–4. The basic works on defence construction in the west of Germany are Arntz, *Kriegsende*, and Christoffel, *Krieg am Westwall*.

<sup>130</sup> *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung*, 279–81. On the involvement of the NSDAP in building fortifications in the Netherlands see telex from Hanns Albin Rauter to Himmler (12 Feb. 1945), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 107 00937–42 [18315] and BA NS 19alt/294, and Nolzen, 'Arbeitsbereiche der NSDAP', 267–8.

<sup>131</sup> Hitler ordinance 12/44 of 1 Sept. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 2. See Bormann to Himmler (3 Sept. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 102 01360 [17964] and BA NS 19neu/2588, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 465 (12 Sept. 1944).

<sup>132</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 521 0006–7 [17959], and LA Saarbrücken, NSDAP Westmark/3, and HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/97, 126.



Reich: OB West and the units of sappers under his command were responsible for all tactical matters connected with the defence works, and the Party for recruiting the workforce, putting it to work, and looking after it.<sup>133</sup> Bormann had sent a special Party chancellery representative, Kurt Koltermann, to the west to organize this cooperation.<sup>134</sup> September 1944 saw, in the Gaue along the western border, the first of eleven 'mole campaigns' in the course of each of which the participating Party agencies put prisoners of war and forced labourers to work alongside a permanent contingent of miners, armaments workers, and administrative staff. The local branch leaders drew up lists of persons earmarked for trench-digging operations and gave them to the Kreisleiters, who issued the summons for emergency service.<sup>135</sup> The Party authorities paid no attention to the factories' need for manpower or to the state of health of those being recruited, caring only for filling the quotas called for.<sup>136</sup> There ensued a torrent of appeals, which were assessed in a lengthy process involving independent doctors, the labour offices, and the Kreis total war committees. Already in September 1944 one official with the general for sappers and fortresses was complaining that the 'people's work levy' had raised only 235,000 instead of the looked-for million workers.<sup>137</sup>

Complaints like this were however premature, for at that time the construction of defences in the west had still not got up to speed everywhere. By the end of December the NSDAP had ultimately, on all fronts, recruited more than 1.5 million workers for the task.<sup>138</sup> Discussions were held between experts from the Party chancellery and the GenPiuFest staff to try to overcome problems that had arisen locally between the civilian and military offices.<sup>139</sup> The military value of the defences had however been cast into a great deal of doubt, and not only by the SD which made vehement accusations to the Reich treasurer against the military sapper units concerned.<sup>140</sup> In the GenPiuFest staff, too, the initial objective of creating a continuous line of fortifications was later seen to be a tactical error, and there was soon a call for a kind of strongpoints system instead; this would comprise a chain of cities and towns that had been built up into fortresses.<sup>141</sup> Guderian consequently demanded of Bormann that

<sup>133</sup> See OB West, Ia/IaF/Insp.d.L. West No. 910/44 g.Kdos. (4 Oct. 1944), BA-MA RH 11 III/202, 4-7, and file note by Festungspionierstab 21 (9 Oct. 1944), YVA, JM 4162.

<sup>134</sup> Briefing paper by Koltermann for Bormann (25 Sept. 1944), BA Sammlung Schumacher, 315, 113-17.

<sup>135</sup> StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Süd/2-15; StadtA Duisburg, 103/1522, 1535, 1551, and the detailed account in Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 342-7.

<sup>136</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6721 (28 Oct. 1944); complaints by RMfRuKp, BA R 3/1615.

<sup>137</sup> Unsigned report on tour of inspection in the west by GendPi Jacob on 8-13 Sept. 1944 (15 Sept. 1944), BA-MA RH 11 III/185, 39-44.

<sup>138</sup> This figure is given in the notes for a presentation by Karl Wilhelm Thilo (11 Jan. 1945), head of the regional fortifications department of GendPiuFest (11 Jan. 1945), BA-MA RH 2/331 b, 95. On Thilo's department see Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 360.

<sup>139</sup> BA-MA RH 11 III/77, 100.

<sup>140</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6728-9. (12 Nov. 1944).  
<sup>141</sup> Thilo, 'Gedanken zum Stellungsbau auf Grund der Winterschlacht' (6 Feb. 1945), BA-MA RH 2/332, 57-59. On this expansion and the command relationships see BA-MA RH 11 III/91; BA-MA RW 4/vorl. 704, and KTB OKW, iv/2. 1304-5.



the Kreisleiters should improve and maintain defences and fortress towns that had already been consolidated.<sup>142</sup> In Königsberg, Breslau, and Küstrin, cities declared fortresses, there were at once moves by the NSDAP to build up stocks. In Breslau there appears to have been sufficient food in reserve, but supplies of weapons and munitions were low.<sup>143</sup> The Nazi policy of fortresses finally collapsed in March/April 1945 all along the line, since the Red Army's advance could not be stemmed any more than that of the western Allies. While the NSDAP was tackling the construction of defences on the border of East Prussia, Keitel and the OKW were already giving further thought to how the defences being built could be secured militarily. To this end the chief of the OKW ordered the military district commander in East Prussia, shortly before 20 July 1944, to raise a further two fighting divisions as rapidly as possible.<sup>144</sup> Koch supported this move, instructing the local branch leaders to go through the lists of persons in reserved occupations in the factories and pass details of those doing less important work to the recruiting authorities. He did not stop there: in a telex he sent via Bormann to Hitler immediately after 20 July, the Gauleiter proposed that 'the entire population [in East Prussia] capable of bearing arms should be called up in a *levée en masse*, armed, and rushed to the border'. This general levy—Koch called it 'a kind of *Landsturm*'—should consist of East Prussian men who were fit for military service and had been in reserved occupations, and it should be raised and trained by the Party. It would, he suggested, be sent into action under the command of the army commander concerned when there was an immediate threat by the enemy. The *Landsturm* Koch was proposing for East Prussia was thus not part of the standing army, but a militia-like force to be activated only in a defence crisis and whose members would, once the enemy had been successfully repelled, go back to their civilian jobs.<sup>145</sup>

Guderian quickly adopted this idea of a militia-like *Landsturm* for East Prussia, but set different priorities from Koch. He told Wilhelm Schepmann, chief of staff of the SA supreme command, of the scheme, suggesting to him that the *Landsturm* planned for East Prussia should be raised by the SA.<sup>146</sup> He was taking over Koch's concept of making use, in the event of Russian breakthrough, of men who were fit for military service but in reserved occupations. Schepmann gratefully accepted Guderian's offer. On 4 September 1944 he telephoned Hans Müller, one of Bormann's personal advisers, in order to go the whole hog; he asked to have all men remaining at home given military

<sup>142</sup> GenStdH/GendPiuFest/Abt. Landesbefestigung No. 13 673/44 g.Kdos., sgd. Guderian (29 Dec. 1944), BA-MA RH 2/317, 198.

<sup>143</sup> Report by cavalry captain Von Loeben of 12 Panzer Division on conditions in the enemy-occupied hinterland (11 Mar. 1945), BA-MA RH 2/2129, 107–8.

<sup>144</sup> This and what follows according to Koch telex to Bormann (21 July 1944), BA NS 6/780, 3–5.

<sup>145</sup> The *Landsturm* Koch was introducing had nothing to do with the 'Landsturm duty' for East Prussia that had been enacted after the defence law act of 21 May 1935; see *RGBl.* I, 1935, 694, and Absolon, *Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 81–4.

<sup>146</sup> Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 362, and Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 11–12.

training by the SA—that is to say he was wanting the *Landsturm* to be set up as a militia throughout the Reich, not just in East Prussia.<sup>147</sup> Control of this Reich-wide body was to lie with the SA. Schepmann was clearly angling through Bormann to have a Führer decree issued that gave this task to the SA. To lend his request the necessary emphasis he pointed to the examples of Salzburg and Oberdonau, where the Gauleiters had, he said, already quite a long time ago urged the leaders of the SA to give the male inhabitants military training.

The head of the Party chancellery at once told the Reichsführer SS what Schepmann was aiming at; not least because of the traditional rivalry between the SS and SA, Himmler turned it down. As head of army armament (*Chef der Heeresrüstung*, ChHRüst) and commander of the replacement army, the Reichsführer SS at this time carried most weight in any discussions on the *Landsturm*, since the planned militia would have to be supplied with weapons and ammunition.<sup>148</sup> Bormann and Himmler quickly came to an agreement to take the *Landsturm* under their own wings. Bormann had a Führer decree on the formation of a German national defence force (*Volkswehr*) drawn up, under which the political leadership of this force would fall to the Party chancellery and its military deployment to the Reichsführer SS. The Party chancellery then rejected the SA's request to lead the national defence force, giving Schepmann the post of inspector of small-arms training.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile the draft of the Führer decree no longer used the term *Deutsche Volkswehr*, but rather *Volkssturm*.<sup>150</sup> On 25 September 1944 Bormann had the draft signed by Hitler.<sup>151</sup> In the 'Führer decree on the formation of the *Deutscher Volkssturm*', which was not published in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* until a month later, Hitler ordered that 'a German *Volkssturm* be formed in all Gaue of the Greater German Reich, from all men aged 16 to 60 able to bear arms', to defend 'the soil of the homeland with all weapons and all means'.<sup>152</sup> The raising and leading of the *Volkssturm* lay in the hands of the Gauleiters, who received their guidance from the head of the Party chancellery. The training, arming, and equipping of this force was to be done 'by the Reichsführer SS as commander of the replacement army'. This wording was used to avoid the *Volkssturm* being under a military authority—for Bormann and his staff it was a 'Party matter'.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>147</sup> On what follows see Müller's minute to Bormann (4 Sept. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 107 00230 [17971], and BA NS 19alt/184, and Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 464–5 (12 Sept. 1944).

<sup>148</sup> On cooperation between the PK and ChHRüst/BdE on arming the NSDAP, which began after the Italian crisis, see BA NS 1/414, and BA NS 6/313, 321.

<sup>149</sup> Minutes by Zander (22 Sept. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 164–9; Schmier, *Martin Bormann*, 316–17; Mammach, *Volkssturm*, 32–4, and Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 42–5.

<sup>150</sup> This name-change must have occurred on 22 Sept. 1944; see Friedrich telex to Bormann (22 Sept. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 161–4. On the previous day Goebbels was still speaking of Hitler having now ordered the raising of a 'Deutsche Volkswehr'; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii. 534–5 (21 Sept. 1944).

<sup>151</sup> See Bormann's letter to his wife (26 Sept. 1944), in *Bormann Letters*, 123–4.

<sup>152</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1944, 253–4, here 253 (quotations).

<sup>153</sup> Bormann circular 324/44 of 14 Oct. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 367.

Bormann and the Party chancellery at once set about developing, in their own authorities and the NSDAP, the administrative structure for the *Volkssturm*. The implementing instructions for the Führer decree of 25 Sept. 1944 began by requiring the Gauleiters to appoint an assistant to have charge of all *Volkssturm* matters at Gau level.<sup>154</sup> The choice of this assistant, who bore the title of head of Gau staff, was to be decided to a major extent by his 'loyalty to the Führer, steadfastness, and soldierly expertise'.<sup>155</sup> Bormann also had Working Group V set up in the Party chancellery, on which all NSDAP organs involved with the *Volkssturm* were represented;<sup>156</sup> its purpose was to coordinate the building up of the force within the Party organization. Actual control of it inside the Party chancellery was however by the newly created Amt II V under Hans Bofinger, where all decrees, orders, and announcements for the *Volkssturm* were drafted when they had any connection with 'political matters'.<sup>157</sup> Himmler, in his area of command, had created for all military matters a *Volkssturm* staff entrusted to Gottlob Berger, head of the SS main office.<sup>158</sup> There were still a few disagreements between this office and the Party chancellery's working group, sparked off most of all by Berger's official title.<sup>159</sup> A number of Gauleiters also complained about Berger encroaching on their sphere of competence.<sup>160</sup> By early November at the latest, however, all unclear points had been sorted out.

The actual setting up of the *Volkssturm* began immediately after the public announcement of it on 18 October 1944. The local branch leaders drew up lists of men aged 16 to 60 in their areas, and had them attend 'registration roll-calls'.<sup>161</sup> In contrast to the *Heimatflak* and construction of defences, this recruiting affected all authorities, institutions, and organizations in the Greater German Reich. Every man between the ages of 16 and 60 was to be enrolled in the *Volkssturm*, irrespective of whether he was in a reserved occupation, had

<sup>154</sup> Bormann order 277/44 of 26 Sept. 1944, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 521 00056–58 [18001], and LA Saarbrücken, Mischbestand NSDAP-Westmark/15. Treated thoroughly in Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 37–72.

<sup>155</sup> This title was advanced by Bormann in a telex as an addition to his order 277/44, see *Verfügungen*, vii. 365. On the choice of heads of Gau staff see Friedrich's telex to Bormann (3 Oct. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 3–9. The forty-two heads of Gau staff are listed in Seidler, '*Volkssturm*', 386–8.

<sup>156</sup> Bormann telex to Friedrichs (26 Sept. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 174–7; Bormann circular 287/44 of 29 Sept. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 365; Mammach, *Volkssturm*, 55, and Seidler, '*Volkssturm*', 51–2.

<sup>157</sup> On the range of work of Amt II V see Bofinger presentation (11 Oct. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 143–6.

<sup>158</sup> Letter from Himmler to Maximilian von Herff, head of the SS personnel office (7 Oct. 1944), *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiche 306 00050 [18064], BA BDC SS-Offizier Gottlob Berger; Mammach, *Volkssturm*, 56–8, and Seidler, '*Volkssturm*', 56–7.

<sup>159</sup> Bormann to Friedrichs (2 Oct. 1944), BA NS 6/313, 74.

<sup>160</sup> Fritz Bracht, GL of Upper Silesia, to Bormann (20 Oct. 1944), BA NS 3/314, -12–13.

<sup>161</sup> On the registration by the OLs see Bormann order 318/44 of 12 Oct. 1944, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, pt. 1, fiches 101 12357–62 [18034], and BA R 43 II/692 a; HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23/5; Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 73–88, here 75–6; Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 230–6, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*, 377–9. A sample of a summons to the *Volkssturm* appears in Mammach, *Volkssturm*, 180.

no reserve liability, or had been excused military service on health grounds. To give an idea of the scale at which the NSDAP was operating here, it is enough to point out that on 30 September 1944 a total of 13,535,300 men were working in the Third Reich's war industry;<sup>162</sup> through the *Volkssturm* the Party thus had access to a group larger in numbers than the Wehrmacht with its 11.2 million troops. The NSDAP's task was to organize militarily on the home front more than 13.5 million men and give them political leadership—to make ideological fanatics of them, committed by oath to the needs of a defensive war. It was thus only logical that the swearing-in of the *Volkssturm* should be held on 9 November 1944, probably the most important day of commemoration in the Party's calendar. Throughout the Greater German Reich units of the *Volkssturm* took their oath as part of the Party celebrations.<sup>163</sup> The wording of it was created by the Party chancellery, and ran: 'I swear by God this holy oath: that I shall be unconditionally faithful and obedient to the Führer of the Greater German Reich Adolf Hitler. I vow that I shall fight valiantly for my homeland, and will sooner die than give up the freedom, and with it the social future, of my people.'<sup>164</sup>

Between November 1944 and April 1945 the *Volkssturm* was built up by the Party chancellery and Reichsführer SS into a formation committed to classic military principles.<sup>165</sup> It was organized in battalions, companies, platoons, and sections, in each of which a leader was duly selected and trained. Members of the *Volkssturm* were, in accordance with the 1907 Hague Convention on the Laws and Custom of War on Land, identified as combatants by an armband with the words 'Deutscher Volkssturm. Wehrmacht'. Service within the *Volkssturm* was closely regulated. Military training, taking place on Saturdays and Sundays and occupying seven hours a week, included thorough instruction on weapons of all types.<sup>166</sup> The unit leaders were trained on courses lasting 1–2 weeks.<sup>167</sup> Where political education was concerned, Bormann had already on 22 October 1944 issued 'principles for guiding other ranks of the *Volkssturm*', in which he found endless new phrases for urging the leaders to school those under them 'in the most passionate hatred of the enemy'.<sup>168</sup> The Party chancellery's Dept. II V and Working Group V saw their main task

<sup>162</sup> Figures from the entries for 'German national economy in total' in the table in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 914.

<sup>163</sup> BA Sammlung Schumacher, 285, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 184 (9 Nov. 1944), and Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 126–34.

<sup>164</sup> Bormann circular 354/44 of 27 Oct. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 328. On the drafting of the text, BA NS 6/314.

<sup>165</sup> BA NS 6/98–99, and the analysis by Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 169–257.

<sup>166</sup> Training regulation by Berger (16 Oct. 1944), see Kissel, *Der deutsche Volkssturm*, 122–4; StA Münster, Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen der NSDAP/86–8; Bormann announcement 446/44 of 13 Dec. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 382–4; Mammach, *Volkssturm*, 58–70; Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 137–53, and Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 105–18.

<sup>167</sup> Account by Rudolf Pietsch (November 1959) in Kissel, *Der deutsche Volkssturm*, 136–41, here 138, and Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 180–4. The training of *Volkssturm* leaders was given by officers from the ChHRüst u. BdE.

<sup>168</sup> BA NS 6/98, 28–9; Bormann circular 349/44 of 26 Oct. 1944, in *Verfügungen*, vii. 370–2.

as producing a flow of new material for the ideological indoctrination of the members of the *Volkssturm*. One such production was the multi-page booklet *Deutscher Volkssturm—Der Dienstappell* [The Call to Serve]; this was modelled on similar Party literature for commemorative occasions, and contained easily remembered slogans about the aims of the *Volkssturm* together with various songs extolling the fatherland.<sup>169</sup> The more fanatical its members were, the more likely it would be in battle—so the Party chancellery thought—to help in making final victory possible.

Bormann and his staff however seem soon to have realized that the military significance of the *Volkssturm* did not measure up to their original expectations.<sup>170</sup> The Party chancellery received repeated complaints about the poor equipping of the *Volkssturm* with arms and clothing, and the inadequate military training of its units.<sup>171</sup> This however merely explained the *Volkssturm*'s inefficiency: it was compounded with a real design fault. Because of the extensive powers of the NSDAP in training the *Volkssturm*, the use of it in military operations had, in every individual instance, to be negotiated between the relevant Party authority and the army—though the operations department of the army general staff had had it ensured by Berger in mid-November 1944 that when used in battle the *Volkssturm* would tactically always be under army command.<sup>172</sup> Although even Himmler supported the Wehrmacht position on this, Hitler occasionally made exceptions to the rule; he called on the C-in-C of Army Group Courland, for instance, to 'carry out the measures necessary for conducting the battle . . . in a trusting cooperation with the Gauleiter',<sup>173</sup> thus avoiding the *Volkssturm* coming directly under the command of the front-line troops.<sup>174</sup> A great many *Volkssturm* units went into action right in the front line, fighting to drive the Allied armies out of German territory;<sup>175</sup> the force was besides often brought in as a guard garrison for forts and defence lines in the rear.<sup>176</sup> Just on 31,000 members of the *Volkssturm* fell in battle or

<sup>169</sup> BA NSD 3/15. Ideological schooling in the organization is discussed briefly in Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 174–84.

<sup>170</sup> There are indications of this in a letter from Bormann to his wife (4 Feb. 1945), in *Bormann Letters*, 170.

<sup>171</sup> Report by the Küstrin KL (5 Apr. 1945), BA NS 6/135, 161–98, here 171–3; report from a Vienna KL (6 Apr. 1945), BA NS 6/756, 16–17, and Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 236–41.

<sup>172</sup> OKH/GenStdH/Op.Abt./I M No. 14160/44 g., sgd. p.p. Bonin (11 Nov. 1944), BA-MA RH 2/316, 134. This initiative was prompted by events in Kreis Goldap (East Prussia), when a *Volkssturm* battalion had retreated from a defensive position on the orders of a KL without a neighbouring grenadier division being informed; see report by Col. Reichardt (21 Oct. 1944), *ibid.* 138. On relations between the *Volkssturm* and Wehrmacht see Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 355–71.

<sup>173</sup> OKH/GenStdH/Op.Abt./Abt. Landesbefestigung No. 13079/44 g.Kdos., sgd. p.p. Bonin (14 Dec. 1944), BA-MA RH 2/317, 109.

<sup>174</sup> Hitler's telex to the OB of Army Group Kurland (27 Feb. 1945), BA-MA RH 2/1930, 110–11, here 111 (quotation).

<sup>175</sup> See Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 119–49, who gives the fullest analysis so far of the use made of the *Volkssturm*.

<sup>176</sup> Briefing note by Thilo (16 Jan. 1945), BA-MA RH 2/331 b, 24; KTB OKW, iv/2., 1303–4, and Seidler, 'Volkssturm', 297–307, 314–16.

were reported missing in action.<sup>177</sup> Seen against the vast losses among regular troops in the closing months of the war, this number is comparatively modest. The *Volkssturm*'s function thus seems to have had far more to do with keeping up a certain readiness to serve the country among the German population than with having any real military value.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 167, tab. 1.

<sup>178</sup> I am in agreement here with Riechert and Ruppert, *Herrschaft und Akzeptanz*, 242, and Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*. 380–1.

## V. The NSDAP and the *Volksgemeinschaft*

WHAT standing did the NSDAP now take on, between September 1939 and April/May 1945, within German war society—or put another way, how did the relationship between the Party and the population change under the conditions of the Second World War? After 1933 the NSDAP had transformed German society into a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a national community based on the exclusion of Jews, Sinti, Roma, homosexuals, ‘anti-social elements’, and what were termed objective opponents of the Nazi regime.<sup>1</sup> At the same time it had become a body aiming for the inclusion of the widest possible segments of society, so long as these were ‘racially pure’, ‘of healthy stock’, and ‘politically reliable’. This development was evident in the unprecedented growth in the membership of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations after 1933. The motives leading people to join these Party organizations were manifold; by no means all did so voluntarily, and often a diffuse mixture of deliberate pressure to conform and naked compulsion was involved.<sup>2</sup> The circumstances leading up to a person joining one of the Nazi organizations are however not the crucial element in researching the history of the Party after 1933. Of far more importance seems to be how members of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations operated within this institutional framework, what political, social, and material advantages their belonging to the Party brought them, and at whose expense. Studies done in recent years on the appropriation of Jewish property and ‘aryanization’ have shown that the anti-Semitic policy was to a major extent initiated by the Nazi organizations, and that those who profited from it were drawn mainly from their ranks.<sup>3</sup> In this respect there was a close connection between the inclusion of the ‘racially pure’ population and the simultaneous exclusion from German society of the Jews.

One of the most important opportunities for social advancement that the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations offered lay in the taking on of official posts. At the start of the war there were more than 1.2 million officials in the Party, of whom 98.2 per cent were acting on an honorary basis.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the origins of the word *Volksgemeinschaft* and its use in the Nazi state see Stöver, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 35–53. It was also playing a role in public discussion during the Weimar Republic; see Föllmer, ‘Fragile “Volksgemeinschaft”’, and id., ‘Kranke Volkskörper’.

<sup>2</sup> This was true for almost all the Party’s divisions and affiliated organizations, though not for the NSDAP and SS. For employees being a member of the DAF was de facto compulsory, even though this was nowhere laid down: Hachtmann, ‘Lebenshaltungskosten’, 39–42.

<sup>3</sup> Bajohr, ‘Gauleiter in Hamburg’, 315–23; id., ‘Arisierung als gesellschaftlicher Prozeß’, and id., ‘Verfolgung’, with many references to the copious literature on the subject.

<sup>4</sup> On the opportunities for social advancement that holding an official post in the NSDAP opened up see the collective biography of the Kreisleiters of Westphalia by Stelbrink, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP*, 46–80.



The ratio was similar in the divisions and affiliated organizations.<sup>5</sup> Working on an honorary basis was the normal situation among Party officials. After the seizure of power the several million men and women working unpaid in the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations gained many opportunities for sharing in political power. The NSDAP block wardens provide an excellent example of this in action.<sup>6</sup> These political leaders—on the lowest rung of the Party hierarchy—spied on the population and played a part in imposing the Nazi regime's social discipline; their reports of deviant behaviour, sent to their parent Party offices, could have drastic consequences for those concerned, and sometimes even be a matter of life or death. The activities of the honorary officials of the Party and its divisions and affiliated organizations were, it might be said, a substitute for the forms of political participation that the regime had suppressed. Though, for instance, trade-union representation of the employees' interests was no longer expedient in the Nazi state, one could as a DAF official still do something about improving working conditions inside one's company. The matter of the possibilities in the Nazi state for and limits on political participation has so far not been addressed, since in scientific language the term has a mostly positive connotation and could not be used in connection with the Third Reich, a society that committed mass crimes. There seems however no reason why, in analysing the Nazi regime (as with other historical forms of society), the question of political participation should not be looked at.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, it is a matter of historical reconstruction of how the people involved were, individually and collectively, locked into National Socialist policy.

Alongside the Führer myth—that ardent veneration of Hitler that had many Germans remaining at his side to the bitter end<sup>8</sup>—a large part of the population was, during the Second World War, linked into the Nazi regime via the NSDAP and its divisions and affiliated organizations. The organizations carried on recruiting new members until the Party and society were near enough the same in their make-up.<sup>9</sup> The *Volksgemeinschaft*, the utopian concept of a classless, conflict-free, and racially pure society, had in the NSDAP been to a large extent already achieved when the Nazi regime embarked on the Second World War. In the first part of the war, from the start of the campaign in Poland on 1 September 1939 to the attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the Party pressed on with the internal shaping of this national community. Against

<sup>5</sup> At the start of the war there were 43,796 full-time and 2m. honorary staff in the DAF; see *Gesamtrechnungsbericht*, 12. The NSV had in 1940 a total of 86,458 full-time and 1,075,316 honorary staff; see Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 319. It has to be borne in mind that the number of full-time NSV staff included 35,455 women with special skills, mainly kindergarten staff and nurses; the NSV thus had only around 50,000 full-time officials; see Hammerschmidt, *Wohlfahrtsverbände*, 592.

<sup>6</sup> Schmiechen-Ackermann, 'Der "Blockwart" '.

<sup>7</sup> On this see the very stimulating remarks by Geyer, 'The Nazi State Reconsidered', 62–3; id., 'Stigma of Violence', 94, 98–100; and id., 'Das Stigma', 689–90.

<sup>8</sup> On the power of the 'Führer myth' in integrating society see Kershaw, *Hitler Myth*, 253–69.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge*, 495–544, here 524–5, 527, calls this process 'total organization'.

the background of the legend of the 'stab in the back' of 9 November 1918 various measures were taken to adapt life on the home front to the war. First of all, the Party leadership took steps to ensure that there were enough staff available to carry on the Party's work to the same extent as before. Full-time political leaders were classified as in a reserved occupation, and the male staff who had been called up were replaced with women. The Reich youth leadership and Hitler Youth worked on stepping up social control over the nation's youth. Young people were the most important manpower resource for keeping the Nazi regime in being, so dissident behaviour among them was not shown the slightest toleration, but—in cooperation with the Gestapo, Kripo, and the courts—punished. In the case of young males this was however possible only where they had not been conscripted into the Wehrmacht, over whose personnel the NSDAP had no powers. To gain more influence on the Wehrmacht and to ease the two churches out of the pastoral care of its troops, the NSDAP tried during the first two years of the war to increase the care and welfare it provided for the soldiers. It could count here on support from the OKW, which recognized the Party as the only body to take charge of the link between home and the front. From that it was only a short step to the Party exerting a stronger ideological influence on the troops, reaching its (temporary) peak in the introduction of the National Socialist political education officer—the *Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier*, or NSFO—at the end of 1943.<sup>10</sup>

During the second stage of the war, from the attack on the Soviet Union to the Italian crisis in the summer of 1943, the way the NSDAP dealt with people on the home front changed. More and more, the Party apparatus was busy on tasks dictated by the war and on short-term crisis management. The problem arose here that after 22 June 1941 it had only half its peacetime complement of staff, in both the full-time and honorary sectors; so the Party chancellery tried to increase the readiness of rank-and-file members to serve by promoting a process of emotional socialization within the Party. NSDAP commemorative events and the introduction of evening meetings of local Party members were designed to suggest to the faithful that they all belonged to one big Party family. At the same time the aim was the ideological motivation of the Party's members and political leaders. Strengthening the National Socialist world view among the members was seen as necessary, too, because by then there were several million foreigners working within the Greater German Reich: the 'racial enemy' was present deep inside the homeland. As with the policy towards the Jews of the years from 1933 to 1938/9,<sup>11</sup> the Party acted as the guardian of racial purity, and promoted the idea of total separation between the German population and the foreign labour force. In cooperation with the police, the ministerial bureaucracy, the Wehrmacht, and big business, steps had been taken since 1941/2 to establish a racial hierarchy among the foreign

<sup>10</sup> On the instilling of a defensive fighting spirit from 1943/4, which I have not dealt with here, see Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 441–80, and Jürgen Förster in the present volume.

<sup>11</sup> On this see the seminal monograph by Przyrembel, '*Rassenschande*', 65–84, 185–210.

workers. Yet the NSDAP's racism and repression were not directed solely against foreign workers; German women who offended against the rule of racial purity were also subject to sanctions by the local representatives of the Party. A strange contrast to the intensification of racism in the employment of foreign labour was offered by the NSDAP's provision of emergency aid after Allied air raids. The NSV, as the main provider of this, had indeed laid down a policy aimed at helping only those who were 'of like race and sound stock'. But under the pressure of the Allied bombing the NSV switched to giving aid to all air-raid victims with no distinctions made. The racial-cum-biological demands of the Nazi regime clearly had, during the war, to be withdrawn in at least one area of welfare policy.<sup>12</sup>

In the third and final stage of the war, from the summer of 1943 to the Nazi state's capitulation on 8/9 May 1945, the NSDAP showed itself as the driving force leading German society into total war. After the collapse of Italian fascism the Party had espoused the cause of mobilizing all human and material resources on the home front; now, it reactivated the strategies for mobilizing the Party's own internal resources that had proved their worth in the 'days of struggle' before 1933. Musters, paramilitary parades, and repeated pledges to hold on were now to suggest to NSDAP members that their efforts would, come what may, be crowned with final victory; the only demand the Party was making of its members was readiness to serve right through to the end. It was concerned, therefore, to keep up an unflagging activism among the faithful. Since the summer of 1943 a large part of this activism had been expended on protecting peacetime consumption from depredation by the armaments ministry, and on maintaining a 'peacetime-like war economy' so as not to have to cope with any deterioration in public mood.<sup>13</sup> At the same time the NSDAP was involving older men, young men, and women more and more in the civilian defence of the Reich. It made a not insubstantial effort to ensure that the military agencies could call on enough manpower to fulfil their 'fighting mission'. Thus, it mobilized almost 100,000 for the *Heimatflak* units, in the summer of 1944 more than 1.5 million for building defence works, and in 1944/5 between 6 and 8 million men for the *Volkssturm*. After 20 July 1944 achieving a state of total war on the home front took pride of place; and the Party had put itself at the very forefront of the drive.

Finally, the fascinating interpretation of the National Socialist state that Franz Leopold Neumann gave in his book *Behemoth* in 1942 and 1944 warrants a few further comments. It can be seen that the assessment with which Neumann began, that in the Second World War the German state, the Party, and German society became identical with each other, was in some respects

<sup>12</sup> This is in some ways evident in remarks in Vorländer, *Die NSV*, 127–75, and Hansen, *Wohlfahrtspolitik*, 197–361. Similarly also Süß, *Volkskörper*, 407, 409, for one sector of government policy.

<sup>13</sup> On the term 'peacetime-like war economy' see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 407–8.

quite accurate. From 1939/40 on the regime's four power centres—the civil-service bureaucracy, the NSDAP, the Wehrmacht, and the economy—underwent a complicated process of interpenetration. In many areas of policy these four increasingly merged with each other; this may be seen most of all in the total mobilization of the population for waging the war, for after 1942/3 this objective had been set by all these four pillars of the Nazi regime.<sup>14</sup> Their institutional amalgamation did not however go as far as the NSDAP simply absorbing the other three centres of power. Even after 20 July 1944 the Party did, it is true, acquire hitherto unknown opportunities for exerting influence over the economy and the Wehrmacht; but these two sectors remained throughout wielders of power on their own account. The presumed final victory, too, would doubtless have done nothing to alter that. How would the NSDAP have been able to dispute Speer, the dictator of the economy, his place in the sun if, thanks in no small part to the weapons pouring from the factories under his control, the war had still been won? What deeper justification would there have been, in that case, for any cutting back by the Party of the Wehrmacht's institutional autonomy? The government bureaucracy would, though, certainly have been at the Party's behest; its 'persisting power' had, in the shared view of the Party, Wehrmacht, and economy, been counterproductive in its effect. The same was true for the local administrations, who became increasingly insignificant. It is highly probable that a victorious end to the war would have been followed by a wide-ranging takeover of the administrative apparatus of the state by the Party.<sup>15</sup>

Neumann's second hypothesis, that the Party and society had under the conditions of the war moved increasingly towards becoming one and the same thing, also merits particular attention. This was, in fact, what happened. Neumann did, admittedly, see the Party and the German population as two sides of a dichotomy; but against that it has to be stressed that a large part of the population was organized within the ranks of the NSDAP, and also made use of this institutional framework to further their individual ends. Power within the NSDAP (if not within the National Socialist state in general) was thus a reciprocal process, operating not vertically but largely via the activities of the Party's officials and membership at local level. These activities lessened not one jot during the war; quite the opposite—one gets the impression that it took Hitler's suicide in the Führer bunker in Berlin, and the banning of the NSDAP by the Allies, to bring this activism to a halt. That the cohesion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* organized by the Party, and ultimately that of the Party apparatus itself, depended increasingly on terror and repression is self-evident, yet the point has to be made that the exclusion based on terror that the NSDAP practised was always a marginal phenomenon. All that changed during the Second

<sup>14</sup> On this see Hüttenberger, 'Nationalsozialistische Polykratie', 437–41, with a so far uncompleted programme of research.

<sup>15</sup> This matches, incidentally, the assessment by Neumann, *Behemoth* (1984), 659–61, where he describes the stage of development reached by the Nazi regime in spring 1944.

World War was the emphasis: the Party became, inwardly and outwardly, generally more repressive, but it still overwhelmingly made use of the mechanisms of inclusion. This can be seen most clearly in the strategies of mobilization within the Party itself; for the most part, Bormann and the Party chancellery left matters at making one appeal after another, calling on the readiness of the Party's members and political leaders to fight on. There are however only a few examples of their resorting to draconian measures against offenders. Even in the closing phase of the war, when many Party members and political leaders were no longer following the Party leadership's orders on how to conduct themselves, a 'terror regiment' of the kind deployed by the Soviet dictator Stalin within his own party during the Great Terror from 1936 to 1939 remained, for the NSDAP, out of the question. Once the Nazi regime had been swept aside by the Allied armies and had finally capitulated on 8/9 May 1945, the NSDAP suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth. A mere handful of Party officials followed their beloved Führer's example and committed suicide. A few went underground, while others—such as the Kreisleiters—were interned by the Allies.<sup>16</sup> The Allied Control Council's Directive No. 24 of 12 January 1946 laid down that all National Socialists were to be removed from offices and positions of responsibility. This was to include all persons who at any time were active full-time in the NSDAP or at any time occupied an office or post in the NSDAP, irrespective of whether this was in local units or higher.<sup>17</sup> This requirement was based on a very wide understanding of the term NSDAP, which included all its divisions and affiliated organizations. As is well known, such a widespread de-nazification never came to pass, for a variety of reasons. There was instead a gradual reintegration of Party officials into society in the two Germanies. A great many previous local and cell leaders and block wardens were still living in the same localities in the 1950s, sometimes in the same houses they occupied before 1945. Admittedly, the two German societies successively detached themselves from National Socialism after 1945; but the personnel of the NSDAP carried on living deep within both societies, as if they had never been a local elite who had taken part in the mass crimes of the Nazi regime and had in many respects actively promoted them. The 'collective silence' that took root in the two German societies did not cover just the crimes of the Nazi state; it took in as well the perpetrators of them, those who profited from them, and their minor accomplices. Perhaps this was because everyone had, before 1945, themselves benefited from the Nazi regime in one way or another.

<sup>16</sup> On de-nazification of the KLs see regional examples in Fait, *Die Kreisleiter*; Arbogast, *Herrschaftsinstanzen*, 204–14; Klefisch, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP*, 25–7, and Stelbrink, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP*, 87–119.

<sup>17</sup> Extracts in *Entnazifizierung*, 107–18, here 108 (quotations).

# C. Slaves for the ‘Home Front’: War Society and Concentration Camps

KAROLA FINGS

## I. Public Awareness of the Concentration Camps

‘A MORAL reckoning of the war’, so a history of the city of Duisburg published shortly after the Second World War tells us, ‘would not be complete without mention of the profound distress with which detailed information about the German concentration camps was received via newspapers and radio after the beginning of the occupation . . . Only then did people learn what had happened. The revelations . . . subjected them to devastating moral pressure.’<sup>1</sup> The pressure most Germans felt after 1945, when photographs and films of gas chambers and mountains of corpses taken by the liberators of the concentration camps were shown throughout the world, was in the Federal Republic a decisive factor in discussion and analysis of the Nazi period. In reaction to the authentic images of mass murder, a discourse took shape that freed the individual from blame. Almost without exception, the story was that the Gestapo had deliberately prevented the public from learning anything about the extent of the arrests, the horrendous treatment of prisoners, and the practice of mass murder. Those crimes, it was claimed, were committed in distant places and in secret, and were thus beyond one’s own experience. The guilty parties were the leadership group around Adolf Hitler and bestial individuals among the SS. It was only with difficulty that concentration-camp research in the Federal Republic freed itself from this post-war consensus.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Averdunk and Ring, *Geschichte der Stadt Duisburg*, 342.

<sup>2</sup> It is no accident that the first publications on the subject, which are still important, were the work of concentration-camp survivors, e.g. Eugen Kogon, *Theory and Practice* (written in 1945 and republished several times in expanded editions), and Hermann Langbein, *Against all Hope*. In 1964 the basic features of the concentration-camp system were described in a report published in connection with the Auschwitz trial: Buchheim, Broszat, Jacobsen, and Krausnick, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, 323–445. But apart from this study and another published in the 1970s (Pingel, *Häftlinge*), general studies of the concentration-camp system were for a long time rare in the Federal Republic of Germany. The multitude of publications on individual camps was eventually followed, more than fifty years after the end of the war, by a two-volume compendium that must be considered the most comprehensive work so far on the history of the Nazi concentration camps: *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (a collection of forty contributions from a



Since then, a start has been made on answering the question implicit in the title of this chapter: what did German society actually know about the twenty-two concentration camps?<sup>3</sup> The number of camps set up by the end of the war—twenty-two main camps and close on 1,200 satellites<sup>4</sup>—is in itself sufficient proof that, despite all claims to the contrary, the concentration-camp system must have been visible. The next question is: what contact did German society have with the camps? What kind of society was it in which mass murder had become an almost routine occurrence since the beginning of the war? What were the relations between the camps and the local communities? Or, putting it another way, how deeply were the main camps and their satellite camps embedded in society?

Historians did not begin to examine this network of relations until the end of the twentieth century. In the case of Dachau and Weimar, two cities that strove to distance themselves from 'their' concentration camps after 1945, studies of relations between camp and city appeared in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> The Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp, whose name commonly serves as a synonym for the extermination of European Jewry, has also been placed firmly in the context of the history of the National Socialist 'model town' of Auschwitz.<sup>6</sup> These studies helped break down the view of the camps as isolated phenomena, and located them to a greater extent within society. More recently, research into the Nazi police and security apparatus<sup>7</sup> gave a major impulse to what has been called the 'social history of terror'.

The present contribution considers selected aspects of the relationship between the war society and the concentration-camp system. It focuses on the 'SS construction brigades', which permeated society to a particularly appreciable extent.<sup>8</sup> The construction brigades were squads of inmates formed in the camps from autumn 1942 onwards and dispatched for clearance work to the larger devastated cities, where they were grouped together in satellite camps. For the first time, the living conditions of camp inmates were seen by a broader public. The establishment of satellite camps did not take place, as in the initial stages of prisoner deployment, in a social vacuum: it was connected with specific developments on the 'home front'. Following the discussion of local communities' dealings with the satellite camps, this contribution concludes by considering the question of the identifiable relations and interactions between the camps and the war society.

symposium held in 1995). A well-researched history of the system's political organization was published a year later: Orth, *Das System*.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: Johe; 'Das deutsche Volk'; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 204–23; and *Öffentlichkeit und KZ*.

<sup>4</sup> Schwarz, *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager*, 261.

<sup>5</sup> Steinbacher, *Dachau*; Schley, 'Weimar'; id., *Nachbar*. On Dachau see also Marcuse, *Legacies*. A volume of the *Dachauer Hefte* entitled 'Konzentrationslager: Lebenswelt und Umfeld', dealing with the various forms of cooperation and collaboration with concentration camps on the part of public authorities, firms, and the general public, was published in 1996.

<sup>6</sup> See Steinbacher, *'Musterstadt' Auschwitz*, a study of the connection between the policies of Germanization and annihilation; also Dwork and Pelt, *Auschwitz*.

<sup>7</sup> *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität*; Gellately, *Gestapo*; Mallmann and Paul, 'Allwissend'.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed study of the SS construction brigades see Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ'.



## II. The Initial Stages of Prisoner Deployment

### I. THE 'HOME FRONT' AND FORCED LABOUR

FROM autumn 1942 more and more squads of concentration-camp inmates appeared in small towns; but they were only one group among many. There had already been forced-labour squads, massive deployment of workers on the autobahns, work squads on the Siegfried Line, and the forced deployment of German Jews in segregated work brigades known as 'Geschlossener Arbeitseinsatz'.<sup>1</sup> Municipal authorities were involved in the deployment of various groups quartered in barracks: they were responsible for the supply of services, the distribution of food and the provision of lodgings, and to some extent also for directing the work. With the beginning of the war and the introduction of imposed state control of business and industry this field of activity expanded. The decrees establishing the food supply and economic affairs offices, charged with 'supplying the population with essential commercial goods' and 'feeding the German people', assigned municipal authorities specific responsibilities with regard to the Reich labour service (RAD), 'community camps' run by private firms, or units of the Wehrmacht.<sup>2</sup>

The first prisoner-of-war camps under municipal administration were established primarily for work on infrastructure projects. In Krefeld the municipal authorities set up a camp for 100 prisoners of war in August 1940 in order to overcome a bottleneck in the supply of unskilled labour for road and park works. In May 1941 the city of Neuss employed prisoners of war on river bank improvements and railway track maintenance. In Düsseldorf prisoners were put to work in the municipal motor pool, the parks department, the public works department, the port, and the hospitals.<sup>3</sup> In some cases they were hired out to local firms, which earned certain cities considerable income. The municipality of Wesseling maintained a camp of eighty prisoners of war who, hired out to industrial and commercial firms at flat rates, brought in around RM1,000 a month.<sup>4</sup> There was a similar arrangement in Brandenburg, which reported in June 1941: 'We have a Polish camp under our administration. The surpluses accrue to the city, so we are able to judge exactly whether a camp is profitable or not.'<sup>5</sup> Municipal authorities concluded contracts for the employment of prisoners of war with the commanders of the Stalags (POW

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see Gruner, *Der geschlossene Arbeitseinsatz*.

<sup>2</sup> See *RGBl.* I, 1939, 1495–1518.

<sup>3</sup> Letters from the cities of Krefeld (31 May 1941), Rheydt (24 May 1941), Neuss (26 May 1941), and Düsseldorf (23 June 1941), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 53/698.

<sup>4</sup> See letter of 15 Jan. 1942 from the mayor of Wesseling to the Association of German Local Authorities (DGT) Berlin, BA R 36/662.

<sup>5</sup> BA R 36/591.

camps for other ranks and non-commissioned officers), specifying the type of work, treatment, lodgings, guarding arrangements, and remuneration.<sup>6</sup>

From 1941 the use of prisoners of war on air-raid protection and rubble clearance grew into a mass phenomenon. In this area, too, specific tasks were assigned to municipal authorities. All air-raid protection measures in the Reich were based on the Air-Raid Protection Law of 26 January 1935, which was amended repeatedly in the course of the war. Air-raid protection, as a fundamental task of the Reich, came under the authority of Hermann Göring, commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, who assigned local tasks not only to his own administration, i.e. the regional air commands of the relevant military districts, but also to the police authorities.<sup>7</sup> As the people in charge of local air-raid defence, the chiefs of police were also responsible for rubble clearance. In addition to their own police forces, they could call on the personnel of the Security and Assistance Service (SHD), the professional and voluntary fire brigades, the Technical Emergency Corps (TeNo), the German Red Cross, and the Reich Air-Raid Protection League (RLB). All air-raid protection activities were coordinated by the commander of the regular police.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the role of the military and police authorities, the main responsibility for dealing with the direct consequences of air raids lay with the municipal administrations, whose many tasks included providing victims with temporary food and shelter, recording the damage suffered, and processing the resulting claims. Because NSDAP local branches and the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization (NSV) tried to keep the most prestigious assistance activities for themselves—and the NSDAP in general sought to monopolize the 'wartime people management' role—there were frequent disputes over areas of responsibility and frequent organizational breakdowns.<sup>9</sup> In January 1940 Göring issued an order that conflict between the NSDAP and the municipal authorities over assistance and rescue activities at local level must be avoided. Even an accompanying threat of punishment, if harmonization was not achieved, did not produce the desired effect. Nevertheless, a division of labour gradually emerged in which municipal authorities were responsible for repair work and rubble clearance, while the NSDAP district leadership, who could also use municipal services for the purpose, provided care and assistance to the local population; but this by no means put an end to competition between them.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Example of a contract between a municipal administration (Strausberg, near Berlin) and the commander of a prisoner-of-war camp (Stalag Fürstenberg an der Oder): BA R 36/662.

<sup>7</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 93–5. On the organization of air-raid protection, see Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*.

<sup>8</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 93–5. On the role of the police in air-raid protection, see Bahl, 'Der Einsatz'. On the commander of the regular police, see Neufeldt, Huck, and Tessin, *Zur Geschichte der Ordnungspolizei*, and Lotfi, 'Der Befehlshaber'.

<sup>9</sup> Rüther, *Köln*, 66–71. On the tasks of the municipal administration, see also the report of 20 Jan. 1942 by Cologne councillor Dr Heringhaus, BA NS 25/1115, 99–103.

<sup>10</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 47–8 and 166–7.

The immediate reason for the increased deployment of prisoners of war in cities was the special programme for the construction of public air-raid shelters ordered by Adolf Hitler on 10 October 1940. To carry out the Führer's 'immediate-action programme', the cities established more and more camps for prisoners of war from the surrounding military districts, with a particularly noticeable increase when Soviet prisoners began to be used. In 1940 Allied bombing was only sporadic, but thereafter there were increasingly massive air raids, especially in the western and north-western areas of the Reich, and these were a major factor in the increased use of prisoners by public authorities. In autumn 1940 the Wehrmacht maintained eighteen of the construction and labour battalions assigned to the military districts—a total of 10,800 prisoners of war—for its own construction work. Another three POW battalions were established in December 1940 to work on the construction of air-raid shelters in the densely populated cities of Essen, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg, which were particularly under threat of attack.<sup>11</sup> Despite considerable resistance on the part of the Reich ministry of labour, further battalions were formed for flexible deployment throughout the Reich. According to the OKW officer dealing with the matter, the formation of these battalions originated with the inspector-general for construction in the Reich capital, Albert Speer. Following an air raid on Berlin, Speer, referring to an order from Adolf Hitler, demanded the formation of a POW battalion of glaziers and carpenters to repair bomb damage in the capital and other cities.<sup>12</sup> Six months later, four glazier battalions, each numbering 1,000 prisoners of war, were established in the Berlin area, the industrial region of Rhineland-Westphalia, the Rhine-Main region, and the coastal cities. The mayors applied to the relevant Wehrmacht authorities for prisoners and distributed them among the various worksites in agreement with the heads of the glaziers' guilds. In each case, the cities had to supply food and lodgings for the battalions. In July 1941 four battalions of roofing workers were formed on the same basis.<sup>13</sup>

Establishment of these special POW battalions enabled the OKW to meet the increasingly insistent demands of the bombed cities. In December 1940 Eckhard von der Lüche, a Düsseldorf city councillor, addressed a request for assistance to the OKW in which he painted a grim picture of the situation of the local population, who had to hold out in badly damaged houses for weeks on end because of the lack of workmen. 'It cannot be denied', he wrote, 'that the population is suffering greatly as a result of the extraordinary damage to housing inflicted in the last two nights' air raids, and morale has been undermined.'<sup>14</sup> Many cities took strong independent action to try and get hold of

<sup>11</sup> On the creation of POW construction and labour battalions in the period 1940–1942, see BA R 41/167 and Pfahmann, 'Fremdarbeiter', 108–12.

<sup>12</sup> OKW, 21 Jan. 1941, to RAM, BA R 41/167, 63.

<sup>13</sup> OKH/In Fest Ia, Merkblatt für Aufgaben, Organisation und Einsatz von Kriegsgefangenen-Glaser-Bataillonen, pt. 1: Beseitigung von Luftschäden, version of 15 June 1941, BA R 41/167, 193201; Chef HRüst und BdE, 31 May 1941, *ibid.* 253.

<sup>14</sup> Lüche's letter of 9 Dec. 1940, BA R 41/167, 89–90.

POW contingents. Cologne, which was confronted relatively early with the problem of massive air raids, is a case in point. In summer 1941 the Cologne municipal construction department had seven members of staff dealing solely with the creation and administration of camps for prisoners of war and aliens, whose inmates were to be employed on ARP tasks.<sup>15</sup> When on the night of 7/8 July 1941 the first heavy air raid on Cologne resulted in over 300 damaged buildings, 174 fires, and 45 deaths,<sup>16</sup> the municipal authorities stepped up their efforts to obtain additional manpower. Although at that time prisoners of war could be supplied only through the labour offices,<sup>17</sup> the Cologne construction department addressed a demand for labour directly to the Wehrmacht commanders in Duisburg, Krefeld, and Cologne on the morning of 8 July, before applying to the Cologne labour office.<sup>18</sup> Following this, a meeting of the commanders, the district master craftsmen, and the heads of the roofers' and glaziers' guilds, together with senior officials from the structural engineering department, was held in the town hall to coordinate the transport, accommodation, feeding, and deployment of the prisoners of war. The next day, an official from the structural engineering department travelled to Berlin to see the competent authorities and lend weight to the demands for manpower. By the end of July 1941, 2,000 prisoners of war had been transferred to Cologne together with 490 guards,<sup>19</sup> and a further contingent was sent there on 2 September.<sup>20</sup> In other cities too the municipal authorities frequently had recourse to prisoners of war, especially the glazier and roofer battalions, for damage repairs and clearance, deploying them alongside RAD, SHD, and Wehrmacht squads.<sup>21</sup> By December 1941 the demand was so great that it could no longer be met.<sup>22</sup>

The initiatives of the individual cities were coordinated at national level by the Association of German Local Authorities (*Deutsche Gemeindetag*, DGT), a municipal lobbying organization. From 1933 the DGT was headed by Karl Fiehler, a National Socialist man of many parts who, as well as being mayor of Munich, had been put in charge of the NSDAP main office for municipal-affairs policy, although its business activities and paperwork remained in the

<sup>15</sup> City of Cologne, office for the deployment of war-essential labour and building materials, 7 July 1941, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/178.

<sup>16</sup> 'Köln im Luftkrieg', 94.

<sup>17</sup> Pfahmann, 'Fremdarbeiter', 82.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of meetings at the labour office on 8 July 1941 and the town hall on 8 July 1941, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/178.

<sup>19</sup> City of Cologne building department, note on additional labour deployment in Cologne, situation as at 29 July 1941, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/178.

<sup>20</sup> Extract from minutes of a business trip by August Lentzen to Berlin in the period 9 to 13 July 1941; file notes of 31 July, 6 Aug., and 2 Sept. 1941, and minutes of a meeting at the regional labour office on 23 Aug. 1941, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/178.

<sup>21</sup> See schedule dated 1 Aug. 1942, classified confidential, on the repair and clearance of air-raid damage by the municipal administration, BA R 36/2697; deployment and organization plans for the repair and clearance of air-raid damage in the cities of Aachen, Hanau, Hanover, Kolberg, Neumünster, and Oldenburg, 1941-2, BA R 36/2737.

<sup>22</sup> Pfahmann, 'Fremdarbeiter', 118.

hands of experienced experts.<sup>23</sup> On 3 June 1942 the Reich minister of the interior entrusted the DGT, as a priority task, with responsibility for advising local authorities in matters regarding air raids and supporting them in their negotiations with central government. In addition to its advisory work through its regional and provincial offices, the DGT also held regular meetings with the municipal authorities of the cities concerned.<sup>24</sup> The employment of prisoners of war was discussed on several occasions at regional or national meetings of the association, and the minutes of those proceedings show it was welcomed without reservations. For example, at a meeting on 2 October 1942—attended by the mayors of around twenty cities, as well as representatives of the DGT, the Party main office for municipal-affairs policy, and the Reich ministry for armament and ammunition—the mayor of Nuremberg, Willy Liebel, stated: 'The deployment of prisoners has been a piece of good luck for us . . . For the first time we have managed to get approval to employ Bolshevik officers. Of course, there is an article in the Geneva Convention about this, but in my opinion, this is a case of "necessity knows no law".'<sup>25</sup> The Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War adopted in Geneva in 1929 contained specific provisions protecting prisoners of war against ill treatment. Among other things, it prescribed respect for the person and honour of prisoners and forbade their employment in the manufacture of war material.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, Liebel took the view that international law could be cast aside when necessary and that civilized norms did not apply in wartime.

In view of the critical situation in the cities, the top municipal officials were also prepared to circumvent the usual procedures and ignore traditional administrative rules. Speaking at the same meeting in his capacity as mayor of Munich, Fiehler invoked the need to sidestep the cumbersome labour offices:

We have used up the manpower available to us for clearance work. We tried to negotiate with the regional labour office but the people there are amazingly pig-headed. They simply say there are no prisoners available. The general in overall charge of the Stalags told me I can have as many prisoners as I want immediately, in a few hours. But the regional labour office says I'm misinformed: at best, they could take prisoners from the arms factories, and so on. The truth is: the man made no attempt to help. So, with pressure from the Gauleiter, I brought 900 prisoners here, none of them taken from the arms industry. The labour office was simply too lazy to get in touch with the man in charge of the Stalags.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Matzerath, *Selbstverwaltung*, 166–227.

<sup>24</sup> See StA Hamburg, 131-3-D 3.

<sup>25</sup> Report of 2 Oct. 1942 at the 10th meeting of the city mayors' committee of the DGT in Leipzig, BA R 36/10, 145. In autumn 1942 Liebel was appointed by Speer to head the central office of the Organisation Todt in Berlin, see Janssen, *Das Ministerium Speer*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> On the legal position of Soviet prisoners of war, see Streit, *Keine Kameraden* (1997), 224–37. Liebel's reference to the Geneva Convention is erroneous, since the Soviet Union was not party to it—a fact of which the Wehrmacht deliberately took advantage. By February 1942 2m. Soviet POWs had already died in German captivity, see *ibid.* 128.

<sup>27</sup> BA R 36/10, 125.

The tone became increasingly harsh as the war dragged on and the devastation in the cities mounted. Talking about 'foreign manpower' at a meeting in November 1943, Carl Haidn, the mayor of Düsseldorf, said: 'If these people were pushed harder, we could get many hundreds more work hours out of them, or even more.'<sup>28</sup> The crisis in the cities led to local alliances between mayors and Gauleiters, who began to act as local lobbyists and gained some prestige in the process.

Despite all these efforts, the manpower shortage remained a constant problem for the cities, especially as forced recruitment of Soviet labour, which it had been hoped would ease the situation, lagged significantly behind expectations. In a report from the Cologne economic affairs office dated February 1942 we read: 'No new batches of prisoners of war were brought in; there were only transfers from one assignment to another . . . The number of foreigners increased only slightly, many having moved away in breach of contract. As a result, no improvement in the manpower situation was achieved through deployment of prisoners of war and foreigners.'<sup>29</sup> Nor was there sufficient manpower for bomb damage repair and rubble clearance: Cologne's craft enterprises were often bound by contracts with industry, SHD auxiliary workers were not available in sufficient numbers, and in many cases the deployment of foreign forced labour was prevented by the German Labour Front (DAF).<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the deployment of POW battalions had given rise to numerous unforeseen difficulties for the Cologne authorities.<sup>31</sup>

The administrative burden alone was enormous. Prisoners of war had to be registered with the garrison HQ, the factory inspectorate, the labour office, and the dispatching officer at the POW camp. Battalions whose arrival had been announced and for whom accommodation had already been prepared were diverted to other cities at short notice, with no possibility of intervention by the municipal authorities. The security measures, such as perimeter fencing and guarding, also raised problems. The costs for the city were much higher than expected. Barracks had to be equipped with beds, straw mattresses, stoves, tables, cupboards, desks, telephones, latrines, and ablution facilities, and supplied with blankets and cooking utensils which the battalions took away with them when they left. This was a particular source of irritation, especially as the items in question were consumer goods which the bombed-out

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the war committee of the mayors of group A cities held in Munich on 12 Nov. 1943, BA R 36/10, 691; the source erroneously gives the place of the meeting as 'Heydn'.

<sup>29</sup> Report by Cologne's economic affairs committee, 24 Feb. 1942, HASTK, ZS Kriegsschronik No. 111.

<sup>30</sup> Briefing by Lentzen and Wibel for Mayor Brandes, 5 May 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/14.

<sup>31</sup> The following based on: minutes of meeting 8 July 1941, file note 11 July 1941, file note 12 and 13 July 1941, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/178, and file note 3 Dec. 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 53/701.



population sorely lacked. The NSV paid for the food supplies while the War Damage Office met the laundry costs, the costs of a weekly bath for prisoners at the municipal bathhouse, and the costs of transport by tram and truck. The procedure for settling accounts with the Wehrmacht proved very time-consuming. Moreover, the municipal authorities could not decide on the work to be done by prisoners of war as they saw fit, since the Wehrmacht command insisted that battalions assigned to the construction of air-raid shelters could not be used for rubble clearance.

All in all, the cities were far from satisfied with the help they received for rubble clearance in 1942. In order to make the demands of the municipal authorities heard, the mayor of Cologne, Robert Brandes, called a meeting of the large Rhineland cities at the Rhineland and Hohenzollern regional seat of the DGT. On 3 December 1942 the participants discussed difficulties encountered in the deployment of prisoners of war, as well as initial experience with that of 'SS prisoners', who were already available in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg at that time. There is not a single word in the minutes to suggest that the use of concentration-camp inmates, as opposed to the prisoners of war employed so far, was seen as a qualitatively new step. The municipal authorities continued to have no fundamental objection to making use of prisoner squads, irrespective of whether they were prisoners of war or concentration-camp inmates. Rather, their criticism centred on the administrative burden and the frictional losses in deploying the manpower caused by the orders of the Wehrmacht and SS. The comparatively high costs of accessory services, for the POW battalions in particular, were a less important issue, since in any case the Material War Damage Decree of 30 November 1940 allowed local authorities to bill the central government for expenditure incurred by reason of bomb damage.<sup>32</sup> The large Rhineland cities officially requested the DGT to urge the competent authorities in Berlin to unify and simplify the deployment of prisoners of war and SS prisoners.<sup>33</sup> In autumn 1942 there were similar calls for greater efficiency from other regions of the Reich.<sup>34</sup>

The emergencies caused by the air raids put regional and local authorities under considerable political pressure. Anti-government clichés of the National Socialist movement were revived, notably the claim that the state administration was unable to cope with crises because of the 'dispersion of powers'.<sup>35</sup> In the 'home warzone', to use Göring's term, the NSDAP organizational structures and the Gauleiters were increasingly seen as the most reliable pillars of the regime, and their prestige rose accordingly. The NSDAP had proved its worth to officials through the damage assessment reports drawn up by

<sup>32</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1940, 1547.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from DGT Rhineland office to DGT Berlin, 4 Dec. 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 53/701.

<sup>34</sup> For examples, see BA R 36/2697.

<sup>35</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938-1945*, xi, 4091-3 (No. 309, 17 Aug. 1942).



its local branches, which were considered much more reliable than those of the police and Luftwaffe.<sup>36</sup> The Gauleiters, in particular, gained increased powers. Their special position in the regions had already been strengthened in April 1942, when the general plenipotentiary for manpower, Fritz Sauckel, designated them 'plenipotentiaries for manpower in the Gaue'.<sup>37</sup> By November 1942, under the pressure of the air raids, all Gauleiters had been appointed Reich defence commissioners and were therefore responsible for further regional management tasks such as the establishment of bomb damage task forces.<sup>38</sup>

Towards the end of 1942 Göring again delimited the powers and competence of the various bodies involved in air-raid protection. In a circular dated 17 December 1942, he established the responsibility of the commanding generals and the commanders of the Luftgau (Luftwaffe administrative areas) for all air-raid protection measures, and authorized them to deploy, in addition to Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht auxiliary squads, all bodies under the command of the regular police. The NSDAP was entrusted with all 'matters concerning leadership and care of the population'. On this point Göring stated: 'It is precisely in times of great psychological stress caused by massive attacks that, in addition to material care for our fellow countrymen, psychological support is of prime importance. Moreover, an unshakeable will to defend the Fatherland is decisive for success in repairing damage and overcoming crises. Education in this attitude is the task of the Party.'<sup>39</sup> In practice this meant drafting reports, organizing emergency accommodation, food, and provisions for the population, and supplying air-raid defence personnel. Göring forbade the Reich defence commissioners to interfere in matters that were the responsibility of the Luftwaffe and police departments. On the other hand, the Gauleiters had extensive powers of command over the administrative authorities. Although this might seem to have fanned the flames of demarcation disputes between the municipal authorities and the Gau leadership, in fact the Gauleiters proved, from the point of view of the municipalities, to be important 'regional lobbyists' who were able to secure assistance from Berlin for 'their' Gaue.<sup>40</sup> This applied both to material aid and to help with clearance work. The closing of ranks between the traditional administrative authorities and the specific NSDAP institutions came about all the more easily in the

<sup>36</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. I, v. 267 (7 Aug. 1942).

<sup>37</sup> Directive No. 1 on the appointment of Gauleiters as plenipotentiaries for labour deployment in the Gaue, 6 Apr. 1942, BA R 3/1817, 178–9.

<sup>38</sup> Naasner, *Neue Machtzentren*, 177–9. On Gauleiters' powers during the war, see Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter*. The Reich minister of the interior issued directives governing the activities of the task forces on 6 May 1942 in an attempt to prevent further removal of powers from his own remit, see BA R 43 II/667, 89. In practice, because of the different state and party boundaries, deployment of the task forces did not achieve the desired results, see *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945*, xi. 4091–2 (No. 309, 17 Aug. 1942).

<sup>39</sup> Reich marshal of the Greater German Reich and commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe on 17 Dec. 1942 *re* delimitation of command powers, BA R 36/2697.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Bajohr, 'Hamburgs "Führer"'.

course of the bombing campaign, as the administration had become significantly radicalized in the early war years. Finally, it was again the Gauleiters who smoothed the way for the deployment of concentration-camp inmates in the bombed-out cities.

## 2. LOCAL POLICY AND THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The demand for concentration-camp inmates from municipal authorities, who had no scruples about it, points to general acceptance of the concentration camps. How was it possible for the camp system to be expanded in the second half of the war to such an extent that, in hundreds of locations, concentration-camp inmates lived and worked in town centres in full view of the population? To answer this question we need to examine, however briefly, the relationship of cities to the camps up to and including 1942. Concentration camps were a constant instrument of National Socialist rule from the very beginning. The 'unofficial' concentration camps and detention centres established in the cities in 1933–4 for the 'elimination' of political opponents were particularly conspicuous. With the reorganization of the concentration-camp system from 1934 onwards under an 'inspector of concentration camps', they disappeared from public view,<sup>41</sup> but they remained anchored in the consciousness of the population and, fed by reports from released inmates, maintained a climate of fear and repression.<sup>42</sup> Friends, neighbours, and well-known figures disappeared into the camps, and the fact that they were deliberately shrouded in secrecy destroyed all will to resist more surely than any policy of public information.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the camps promised a 'Volksgemeinschaft free of criminals':<sup>44</sup> they were for enemies of the state and troublemakers, whose removal from society was welcomed in principle by the majority of the population.

Once the camps had served their purpose during the power takeover phase, Heinrich Himmler began their planned transformation into a concentration-camp system consisting of a few large camps spread over the territory of the Reich for geostrategic reasons, designed to accommodate a total of 30,000 to 50,000 prisoners. Work on the Sachsenhausen camp began in July 1936, followed in 1937 by the construction of Buchenwald and the expansion of Dachau, and in 1938 a start was made on plans for Flossenbürg and Mauthausen.<sup>45</sup> The underlying concept was not only the effective silencing or 'elimination' of political opponents but the creation of an extra-judicial penal and detention system that would serve the 'general prevention of racial crime'<sup>46</sup> For Himmler, as Reichsführer SS and chief of police, the camps were a major factor in expanding the material basis of the SS and establishing it permanently as a leadership elite. In early 1937 there were approximately 8,000 prisoners

<sup>41</sup> Drobisch and Wieland, *System*; Tuchel, 'Planung'.

<sup>42</sup> Johe, 'Das deutsche Volk', 334–5.

<sup>43</sup> Haffner, *Defying Hitler*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> See Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*.

<sup>45</sup> See Tuchel, 'Planung', 43–59.

<sup>46</sup> See Herbert, 'Von der Gegnerbekämpfung'.

in concentration camps. At that time, the expansion of detention facilities was aimed at preventing disturbances on the home front in the event of war, as Himmler made clear in an address to Wehrmacht officers on 18 January 1937: 'The camps are enclosed by barbed wire, electrified fences. It goes without saying that anyone entering a forbidden zone or access road will be shot . . . We must be clear in our minds that, if war comes, we shall have to imprison a very large number of unreliable elements if we are not to prepare the ground for highly unpleasant developments in the event of war.'<sup>47</sup>

In the places where large concentration camps were built and expanded in the 1930s, there is no evidence of any objections to what the SS was doing. On the contrary, the construction phase was marked by 'collective tolerance' of the camps, based on widespread rejection of the categories of people imprisoned there.<sup>48</sup> The SS did not plan the camps in a vacuum. It was concerned to secure the support of the municipal and regional authorities, without whose assistance it would have been impossible to obtain plots of land for camps and SS accommodation, power and food supplies, or access roads. Research on Dachau and Weimar has shown that the siting of the camps met with no general resistance. On the contrary, the concern of the local authorities was to profit from it. The Dachau authorities, for example, welcomed the establishment of a camp in the buildings of a neighbouring former gunpowder and munitions factory, since they anticipated it would stimulate the local economy.<sup>49</sup> The concentration-camps inspectorate also invoked the economic incentive in autumn 1936 when seeking a new location for the Lichtenburg concentration camp, which was no longer big enough. In pressing the Thuringia interior ministry for a swift decision, the inspectorate pointed out that it would otherwise award the camp to another bidder: 'Several Prussian cities have applied for this camp to be transferred to them, and have earmarked funds for that purpose.'<sup>50</sup> In the case of Weimar, it is true that the municipal authorities were not directly involved in establishing the Buchenwald concentration camp, but this camp too could not have existed without its manifold relations with the city.<sup>51</sup> In the places where concentration camps were located, close connections developed between the camps and the local authorities, through which the latter sought to advance their own interests by way of economic benefits, the deployment of inmates on public construction works, and the supply of goods.

Until the mid-1930s the development and expansion of the concentration-camp system was determined by considerations of power consolidation,

<sup>47</sup> Lecture by Himmler on 'activities and tasks of the SS and the police' at a national political course for the Wehrmacht, 15–23 Jan. 1937, quoted in *Buchenwald. Mahnung und Verpflichtung*, 26–7.

<sup>48</sup> Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 342; same findings in Steinbacher, *Dachau*, 181.

<sup>49</sup> Steinbacher, *Dachau*, 93–4.

<sup>50</sup> Inspector of concentration camps, Richard Glücks, to state secretary and head of the Thuringia ministry of the interior, 27 Oct. 1936, in *Konzentrationslager Buchenwald*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Schley, *Nachbar*.

implementation of the racial model of society, and security policing. In contradiction to the popular belief that the SS pursued an aggressively expansionist economic policy, the main impetus for the establishment of an SS economic organization came from outside.<sup>52</sup> The expansion of the 'Führer cities' of Berlin, Nuremberg, Munich, Hamburg, and Linz, for which Adolf Hitler ordered grandiose new building projects, played a big part in it.<sup>53</sup> Hitler had entrusted the planning and execution to his favourite architect, Albert Speer, who, with the building materials industry in crisis, was then confronted with the problem of finding the necessary stone, bricks, clay and cement. Speer agreed with Himmler on the construction of large building material plants, to be manned by prisoners, and on 29 April 1938 the SS Administration Office set up a private company, the German Earth and Stone Works (DEST), for that purpose.<sup>54</sup> An immediate consequence of the negotiations between Speer and Himmler was an advance payment of RM9.5 million from the inspector-general of construction, to be used in the first instance for the construction of DEST plants near Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen.<sup>55</sup> The city of Berlin concluded supply contracts by which it secured ten years' output of the brickworks built alongside the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.<sup>56</sup>

The city of Hamburg came to a similar agreement with the SS. In August 1938 the DEST had bought a brickworks in the Neuengamme district of Hamburg that had been converted and expanded by a small squad of Sachsenhausen inmates. This small SS undertaking was already receiving support from the Hansa city. Following negotiations between the Hamburg Gauleiter, Karl Kaufmann, and Himmler in January 1940, the process of expanding Neuengamme into an autonomous concentration camp was initiated and business relations between the DEST and the city were put on a contractual

<sup>52</sup> Naasner draws the same conclusion in *Neue Machtzentren*, 440. Schulte also emphasizes that economic motives on the part of the SS were not the intrinsic purpose of the foundation of Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH (DEST), see *Zwangsarbeit*, 104–5.

<sup>53</sup> Dülffer, Thies, and Hanke, *Hitlers Städte*.

<sup>54</sup> Georg already drew attention to this connection in *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen*, 42–7. He is followed by Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager*, and Pingel, *Häftlinge*. The connection is stressed by Dülffer, 'Albert Speer', 262–3, and Naasner, *Neue Machtzentren*, 440, and discussed at length by Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit*, 103–25. For a discussion of all DEST plants, see the recent work by Kaienburg, *Die Wirtschaft der SS*, 603–770. See also Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*.

<sup>55</sup> Georg, *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen*, 42–7. On p. 27 Georg quotes a file note by chief of staff Fritz Saupert (German Labour Front) on a meeting with Oswald Pohl on 15 June 1938: 'The founding of the plant originates in a directive from the Führer following a Führer conference with the Reichsführer SS and Architect Speer.' In *Third Reich*, 144, Speer claims that Himmler himself proposed using camp inmates. This version of the facts has been called into doubt at least since the publication of Hepp, 'Fälschung'. On p. 3, Hepp quotes a letter from Hermann Speer to his brother in which he writes: 'I remember you telling me in 1938 that you proposed to Himmler the establishment of a brickworks in Oranienburg for the rebuilding of Berlin and remarking, quite affably, that "after all, the Yids already made bricks when they were captives in Egypt!"' Cooperation between Speer and Himmler on the Führer city of 'Germania' continued during the war, see *ibid.* 15.

<sup>56</sup> Letter of 25 Jan. 1940 from Reichsführer SS to Reich governor, StA Hamburg, Finanzbehörde I, Abl. 1959, 21-690-3/1.

basis. In negotiations attended by representatives of the building department, it was agreed that the city would provide a loan for the expansion of the brickworks and, in exchange, would have privileged access to up to 75 per cent of the annual output. The contract which the city of Hamburg concluded in May 1940 with the Reichsführer SS and the DEST covered not only the supply of clinker bricks, but also the unremunerated use of inmates for extensive dyke and canal works.<sup>57</sup> Thus the consensus on construction of a concentration camp resulted from a variety of motives. Politically, the support of the city of Hamburg was extremely important for the SS, as is clear from the minutes of the negotiations of 23 January 1940, which recorded the first conclusion as follows: 'The deployment of inmates of a concentration camp, to be maintained by the Reich, as a solution to transport issues was welcomed unanimously.'<sup>58</sup> DEST granite works and quarries were also the cores around which the Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, Gross-Rosen, and Natzweiler concentration camps were created.<sup>59</sup>

It was no accident that in 1938 the SS was able to gain a foothold precisely in the building sector. Since the first camps were established, inmates had been used as forced labour in the construction and expansion of infrastructure in order to keep the costs down. Prisoners had traditionally been deployed *en masse* as unskilled labourers, and that practice became a feature of everyday life in the concentration camps. Hard and vexatious physical labour, described for propaganda purposes as 're-education', was a basic component of the concentration-camp penal system.<sup>60</sup> The rearmament campaign initiated under the Four-Year Plan of 1936 was another factor. It led to a considerable shortage of manpower, especially in the building industry, and by the end of 1937 it was clear that the demand for manpower in the building sector could no longer be met.<sup>61</sup> In the pre-war period Himmler was able to seize on the labour shortage, as well as the fact that the 'Führer buildings' were one of Hitler's pet projects, to push ahead with construction of the camp system even in the face of resistance from within the National Socialist leadership, i.e. from Hermann Göring.<sup>62</sup>

The expansion of the camps in the pre-war period shows that the creation of the concentration-camp system did not proceed independently of economic and political developments in the Reich. In terms of labour policy, it served a dual purpose during the rearmament drive: labour relations in the Reich became increasingly militarized, especially when work began on

<sup>57</sup> Letter of 25 Jan. 1940 from Reichsführer SS to Reich governor, StA Hamburg, Finanzbehörde I, Abl. 1959, 21-690-3/1, and Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung', 97-101. Copy of the contract of 6 May 1940 in Kaienburg, *Das Konzentrationslager Neuengamme*, 59-63. See also the rider to the contract, concluded in 1943, BA BY 5/V 279/66.

<sup>58</sup> Letter of 25 Jan. 1940 from Reichsführer SS to Reich governor, StA Hamburg, Finanzbehörde I, Abl. 1959, 21-690-3/1.

<sup>59</sup> Georg, *Die wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen*, 44-5. See also Siegert, 'Das Konzentrationslager Flossenbürg'; Maršalák, *Die Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Mauthausen*; Kirstein, *Das Konzentrationslager als Institution des totalen Terrors*; Konieczny, 'Das Konzentrationslager Groß-Rosen'.

<sup>60</sup> Pingel, *Häftlinge*, 35-42.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 64.

construction of the Siegfried Line in the summer of 1938,<sup>63</sup> while Himmler's repressive apparatus increased the pressure on supposedly unproductive and unsuitable individuals. As well as implementing crime prevention measures at local level, the purpose of the wave of arrests under Operation ARBEITS-SCHEU REICH (a nationwide round-up of the 'work-shy') in June 1938 was to discipline the whole workforce and recruit labour for the DEST projects that the SS was just getting started.<sup>64</sup> Within a few weeks some 9,000 prisoners had been dragged off to the camps, bringing the total number of inmates to 24,000.<sup>65</sup> In January 1939 the man behind the operation, SS-Oberführer Ulrich Greifelt, head of Himmler's Four-Year Plan office, described the purpose of the arrests as follows: 'Given the strains on the labour market, National Socialist work discipline dictated the forcible seizure and employment of all persons unwilling to adapt to the working life of the nation, i.e. work-shy and asocial individuals who are just vegetating . . . Well over 10,000 asocials are currently undergoing re-education in the concentration camps, which are admirably suited to the purpose.'<sup>66</sup> Thus the demand for building materials for the 'Führer cities' in 1938 set in motion a process that led to a major shift in the concentration-camp concept and accelerated the expansion of the camp system.

### 3. CONSENSUS ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF CONCENTRATION-CAMP INMATES

The breakthrough in the mass deployment of concentration-camp inmates came in 1942, when the bombing raids on German cities took on a new dimension and military developments had forced the Reich onto the defensive. The air raid on Lübeck in the night of 28/9 March 1942, which destroyed large parts of the historic city centre and took a high death toll, marked the start of a series of attacks on German cities that peaked temporarily with the massive bombing raid on Cologne in the night of 30/31 May 1942. By the end of that year there had been around a hundred large-scale air raids on cities in the Reich.<sup>67</sup> Supply shortages and homelessness became a threatening mass phenomenon. The internal political situation was so explosive that the leadership elites demanded swift and tangible help for the population. Joseph Goebbels, the Reich minister for public enlightenment and propaganda, was the first to recognize the growing political danger. Following the attack on Rostock at the end of April 1942 he persuaded Hitler to assign him responsibility 'for the introduction of immediate, unified assistance measures' in favour of Gaue

<sup>63</sup> On the militarization of labour relations, see Mason, *Arbeiterklasse and Volksgemeinschaft*. On construction of the Siegfried Line and the associated introduction of partial compulsory service, see Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, 15–18, and Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo', 58–69.

<sup>64</sup> See Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 279–92.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 290.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted *ibid.* 287.

<sup>67</sup> Groehler, *Geschichte des Luftkriegs*, 379. On this subject, see also Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi.



that were unable to cope with the situation on their own.<sup>68</sup> He paid close attention to the situation in Cologne following the carpet bombing of the city in the famous '1,000-bomber raid' in the night of 30/31 May 1942.<sup>69</sup>

Until the late summer Goebbels was unsure whether the massive air raids were an 'episode' or whether the British were capable of keeping them up. In September 1942 he finally recognized that the bombing campaign 'will impose a huge psychological and material burden on us for a long time to come . . . Together with the problem of food supply, the air war is the crucial factor, as it were, in the internal political situation.'<sup>70</sup> To avert a crisis, Goebbels allocated special supplies to hard-hit areas and worked intensively on the development of dedicated propaganda.<sup>71</sup> On the strength of the mandate given to him by Hitler in April 1942, he took control, in the course of the year, of the central management of all bomb damage relief measures and set up the Air-Raid Damage Committee. Chaired by Goebbels himself, the committee's meetings were attended by senior officials from all the higher Reich authorities. By mid-1943 its membership comprised delegates from no fewer than twenty-eight ministries and institutions. Its work consisted primarily in the rapid allocation of 'Reich aid' to individual cities and the dissemination of technical, organizational, and propaganda measures by means of regular memoranda to committee members, Gauleiters, and Reich propaganda offices.<sup>72</sup>

Himmler, too, had given the air raids in the western and north-western regions of the Reich his close attention.<sup>73</sup> He was kept well informed by the regular police commanders and senior SS and police leaders under his authority, and by the Gauleiters. Josef Grohé, for example, had documentary material sent to Himmler a few days after the 1,000-bomber raid and submitted a comprehensive final report to him in June.<sup>74</sup> From 31 August to 3 September 1942 Himmler visited Wiesbaden and Mainz (31 August), Cologne and Düsseldorf (1 September), Münster, Osnabrück, and Bremen (2 September), and Hamburg and Lübeck (on 3 September).<sup>75</sup> In all those cities he inspected the bomb damage in the company of the competent Gauleiters and senior SS and police leaders. On his return to Berlin, Himmler ordered the resources of the concentration camps to be used for the devastated cities. First, a start should be made 'within 10 days at the latest' on the wholesale production of

<sup>68</sup> Reich minister for public enlightenment and propaganda to Gauleiters, Reich governors, and Reich defence commissioners, 28 Apr. 1942, BA R 43 II/667, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iv. 422–48 (1–9 June 1942). For a detailed account of the 1,000-bomber raid, see Rütther, *Köln*.

<sup>70</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, iv. 499 (15 Sept. 1942).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pt. 2, v. 408 (27 Aug. 1942). On the propaganda, see in particular 267 (7 Aug. 1942) and 489–511 (13–16 Sept. 1942).

<sup>72</sup> See BA R 2/3031, as well as the almost complete set of communications from the committee in BA R 2/24.925.

<sup>73</sup> See introduction to *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*.

<sup>74</sup> See BA NS 19/14, 164, and NS 19/2269. Reports on the situation in Cologne also reached Sauckel via the Rhineland regional labour office, see BA R 41/211, 131r, 132.

<sup>75</sup> For the exact itinerary, see *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*, 532–6.



window and door frames 'in as many camps as possible'. Himmler suggested the Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Lublin, and Stutthof camps for the purpose, and proposed that the Neuengamme brickworks be used to manufacture roof tiles for the cities of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck.<sup>76</sup> Second, camp inmates should be sent into the cities for rubble clearance and repair work. Construction brigades of inmates should be 'deployed district by district after an air raid, as a special intervention force'. The squads of inmates should work in sealed-off blocks of houses under light SS guard supported by the local police forces.<sup>77</sup>

The concept of SS construction brigades which Himmler now took up had been developed—though under entirely different circumstances—by the Budget and Buildings Office (subsequently Office C: Construction) of the SS Economic Affairs and Administration Main Office (WVHA). At the end of 1941, with the war of conquest against the Soviet Union proceeding successfully, Himmler had ordered the drafting of a 'peace construction programme' to complement his plan to 'make the east German'.<sup>78</sup> For the construction of SS and police strongpoints, including settlements, camps, and supply facilities, in the conquered territories, the SS should rely extensively on its own resources. On 10 February 1942 the head of the SS construction department, Hans Kammler,<sup>79</sup> a doctor of engineering, presented his 'proposal for the formation of SS construction brigades'. It provided for the assignment of a construction brigade of 4,800 'camp inmates, prisoners of war, Jews, and foreign auxiliaries' to each senior SS and police leader's command area. Kammler based his proposal on an overall construction volume of RM20 to 30 million and an overall demand for 175,000 detainees, who were to be brought to the building sites in the form of mobile labour detachments.<sup>80</sup> In autumn 1942 the course of the war however moved the whole concept in a quite different direction.

Himmler's proposal to make camp inmates available met in September 1942 with a development that had already been long under way. The idea of the large-scale deployment of concentration-camp inmates in the armaments industry had been mooted on several occasions, but no agreement on the principle had yet been reached between Albert Speer, who had been Reich minister for armament and ammunition<sup>81</sup> since 9 February 1942, and Heinrich Himmler. On 15 September 1942 Speer chaired a meeting of representatives of the WVHA and his own ministry, at which both the stepping up of armaments production and the repair of bomb damage were discussed.<sup>82</sup> The WVHA was represented by its head, Oswald Pohl, and Hans Kammler. On the ministry side, apart from Speer himself, the meeting was attended by Walther Schieber, head of the armaments supply office, and Karl-Otto Saur,

<sup>76</sup> BA NS 19/14, 112.

<sup>77</sup> BA NS 19/14, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Reichsführer SS, 31 Jan. 1942, BA NS 19/2065, 8–9.

<sup>79</sup> See Fröbe, 'Hans Kammler'.

<sup>80</sup> SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt Amtsgr. Ch. C 65/Sei., 10 Feb. 1942, BA NS 19/2065, 20–33.

<sup>81</sup> As from 2 Sept. 1943, Reich ministry for armament and war production.

<sup>82</sup> See Pohl's very euphoric report to Himmler on 16 Sept. 1942, BA NS 19/14, 131–3.

as well as two ministerial advisers from the office of the general plenipotentiary for management of the building sector.

Under an item headed 'bomb damage assistance from concentration camps', it was agreed that doors and windows would be manufactured in the camps. According to his minutes, Pohl boldly proclaimed that production could begin 'in our factories in a couple of days', provided Speer supplied the specifications immediately. The target was set at a monthly output of 10,000 windows and 13,000 doors, of which Speer was to take delivery. Discussion of the formation of construction brigades was deferred to the next day, 16 September, and took place at the WVHA. Speer was represented by a member of his staff. It was agreed that three construction brigades, each consisting of 1,000 detainees, should be formed by inmates from the Neuengamme, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald camps. In his minutes Pohl noted: 'The three construction brigades referred to have been available at their camp locations since 25 September 1942. The procedure for taking delivery has been clearly discussed with the Reich minister, Professor Speer. It's going to work out!'<sup>83</sup>

While the use of concentration-camp inmates for clearance work in the cities was uncontroversial, using them on armaments work was another matter. There was a growing conflict between Himmler, who wanted to use camp inmates for armaments production in plants run by the SS, and Speer, who, like the representatives of industry, sought to forestall unwelcome competition from the SS and therefore insisted on the assignment of concentration-camp inmates to industrial enterprises. In agreement with Speer, the SS had already established a few projects of its own prior to September 1942, such as the manufacture of carbines in Buchenwald, pistols in Neuengamme, and anti-aircraft guns in Auschwitz.<sup>84</sup> At the meeting on 15 September, however, the use of camp inmates took on a whole new dimension. Agreement was reached 'to deploy the manpower available in the concentration camps for armaments work on a large scale'. It was argued that the existing system of production inside the camps was no longer appropriate: 'A closed armaments factory with 10,000 or 15,000 inmates cannot be set up . . . within the camp perimeter. It must, as Reich minister Speer rightly said, be situated in the open countryside. The empty factory will then be enclosed by an electrified fence, manned by us with the required number of camp inmates, and thereafter operate as an SS armaments plant.'<sup>85</sup>

Barely a week later, the decision was taken to deploy camp inmates for armaments work along the lines advocated by Speer. On 20 September 1942 Speer presented himself at Führer headquarters together with representatives of the army ordnance office, the heads of various main committees, and officials from his ministry. They remained there until 22 September. In a small

<sup>83</sup> SS-WVHA, 16 Sept. 1942, BA NS 19/14, 133.

<sup>84</sup> On SS armaments production and the Reich ministry for armament and ammunition, see Janssen, *Das Ministerium Speer*, 97-103; Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung', 236-46; Naasner, *Neue Machtzentren*, 300-53.

<sup>85</sup> Pohl, 16 Sept. 1942, BA NS 19/14, 131r, 132.

circle—comprising only Hitler himself plus Saur and Sauckel—Speer, who had been pressed hard by a number of representatives of industry, argued strongly against the development of an SS armaments production capability. He won Hitler's acceptance of his position by promising, as compensation, to supply weapons to the SS.<sup>86</sup> Like cooperation between Speer and Himmler in 1938, the agreements of autumn 1942 marked a decisive turning point in the history of the concentration camps. They set off a wave of deportations,<sup>87</sup> and triggered the boom in satellite camps that lasted until the end of the war.

When Himmler took the decision to send construction brigades into the cities, there were scarcely any models on which to build. Up to autumn 1942 only a handful of satellite camps existed. They included the IG Farbenindustrie AG camp in Auschwitz-Monowitz and the Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG camp in Steyr, both of which originated in deployments of inmates dating back to early 1941.<sup>88</sup> Buchenwald, Neuengamme, and Sachsenhausen, i.e. the concentration camps whose inmates were used to form the construction brigades, also had only a few satellite camps at the time. Up to the summer of 1942 half the inmates of Buchenwald worked not only in the camp's internal labour squads but also in the DEST quarries and in the SS-owned German Equipment Works (*Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke*, DAW). A few smaller labour detachments had been deployed since August 1937 in the city of Weimar, where they were mainly assigned to building and transport work for the municipal authorities, the railways, the police, and a few private firms, for which purpose the inmates were usually brought to the worksites daily by the SS.<sup>89</sup> One of the major innovations in summer 1942 was the establishment of the Gustloff factory in Weimar, which marked the beginning of cooperation between the SS and Speer's ministry on armaments production.<sup>90</sup> But this project too was situated in the immediate vicinity of the concentration camp. When Construction Brigade III was sent to Cologne in September 1942, there existed—apart from the labour detachments in Weimar and four small detachments of fewer than ninety inmates—only one Buchenwald satellite camp, established at the DEST's Berlstedt brickworks in November 1938.<sup>91</sup>

Up to 1942 the great majority of Neuengamme inmates were also employed within the camp, both on internal work and on work for the DEST. At times

<sup>86</sup> See Führer conferences 1942, BA R 3/1505, in particular 98–9. On the meeting and protest of the industrial representatives, see also Speer, *Slave State*, 21–5.

<sup>87</sup> We know of an arrangement Himmler made with Reich minister of justice Otto Thierack on 18 Sept. 1942 to hand over judicial prisoners sent to concentration camps, see Orth, *Das System*, 191. Also, an order from Himmler dated 14 Dec. 1942 'for purposes essential to the war effort which I cannot go into . . . to send at least 35,000 prisoners fit for work to the concentration camps by the end of January 1943 at the latest'. The document in question went on to explain that 'every single pair of hands' was needed. It is reproduced in *Buchenwald. Mahnung und Verpflichtung*, 243.

<sup>88</sup> Orth, *Das System*, 142–8.

<sup>89</sup> Stein, 'Funktionswandel', 173–6; Schley, *Nachbar*, 71–3, 139–41. On the DAW, see Schulte, 'Rüstungsunternehmen', 558–83.

<sup>90</sup> Stein, 'Funktionswandel', 176; Deyda, *Die Geschichte des Gustloff-Werkes II*.

<sup>91</sup> See 'Stärkemeldung des Schutzhaftlagers', 22 Sept. 1942, HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 147, 504.

over 1,000 inmates were working on river regulation projects for the city of Hamburg on a daily basis, and many smaller labour squads worked in the vicinity of the camp for local authorities and firms with which the camp maintained business relations.<sup>92</sup> As in Buchenwald, a joint project of the SS and the Reich ministry for arms and ammunition, namely arms manufacture in the Walther factory, was incorporated in the camp area from September 1942.<sup>93</sup> However, the establishment of satellite camps in industrial enterprises began earlier in Neuengamme than in Buchenwald. The planned construction of a light-metal foundry at the Volkswagen factory in Fallersleben is a special case. The labour squad from Neuengamme assigned to this task was run as an independent concentration camp, Arbeitsdorf, from April to October 1942, when it was shut down.<sup>94</sup> From 15 August 1942 Neuengamme inmates worked at the Phrix plant in Wittenberge on the construction of a new factory, and from November 1942 at the Hermann Göring Works in Watenstedt-Salzgitter.<sup>95</sup> Construction Brigade II, which was sent to Bremen and Osnabrück in October 1942, was also in Neuengamme at the beginning of the satellite-camp development period.

In Sachsenhausen the labour detachments created under cooperation arrangements between Speer and the WHVA were dominant until 1942. By 1943 the 'Speer detachment', an internal labour squad initially assigned to the construction and expansion of a stone-processing plant and employed from 1942 onwards on the recovery of raw materials from booty, comprised over 2,000 inmates.<sup>96</sup> Sachsenhausen's first satellite camp developed in April 1941 from the 'clinker detachment' employed since August 1938 on the construction of a brickworks for the DEST.<sup>97</sup> A few smaller labour detachments were sent to Berlin as early as autumn 1940, where they worked for SS and police authorities.<sup>98</sup> Since the beginning of 1941 the WVHA had maintained a labour detachment that developed, in June 1942, into Sachsenhausen's first large satellite camp in Berlin-Lichterfeld, whose inmates were placed at the sole disposal of the local SS authorities.<sup>99</sup> The first industrial camp was established in

<sup>92</sup> Kaienburg, *Das Konzentrationslager Neuengamme*, 131–4. The two labour detachments on the Baltic peninsula of Darß were an exception. From January to February 1941 and December 1941 to April 1942, each consisted of 50 inmates who were Jehovah's Witnesses. The choice of Jehovah's Witnesses was quite deliberate, see Garbe, *Zwischen Widerstand und Martyrium*. Both detachments are typical of external labour detachments of that period and can be seen as precursors of the satellite camps, though not yet independent satellite camps as such, see Kaienburg, *Das Konzentrationslager Neuengamme*, 161.

<sup>93</sup> Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung', 240–1, 414, and Kaienburg, *Das Konzentrationslager Neuengamme*, 133.

<sup>94</sup> Mommsen and Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk*, 496–515.

<sup>95</sup> Both satellite camps were set up after the WVHA was promised supply quotas or a share of the profits by the firms concerned, see Kaienburg, *Das Konzentrationslager Neuengamme*, 161. On Wittenberge, see id., 'Zwangsarbeit'; on Watenstedt-Salzgitter, see Wysocki, *Häftlinge*, and id., 'Häftlingsarbeit'.

<sup>96</sup> Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung', 117–18.

<sup>97</sup> On the brickworks see ibid. 93–7; *Sachsenhausen: Dokumente*, 76–81; Müller, 'Das Klinkerwerk'.

<sup>98</sup> See breakdown in Schwarz, *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager*, 224–6.

<sup>99</sup> See Endlich and Kaiser, 'KZ-Häftlinge', 239, 242, and Ernst, 'Unsere Ehre', 32. From January 1941 the WVHA maintained a detachment of seventy Sachsenhausen inmates at its office on

September 1942 at the Heinkel aircraft manufacturing works in Oranienburg, following an unsuccessful trial with a detachment of camp inmates in March of that year.<sup>100</sup> With small work detachments in the vicinity of a main camp, a few satellite camps in SS-owned factories, and a few projects in industrial firms, the development of the satellite camps was still at the experimental stage when the first squads of camp inmates appeared in the large cities. In the following chapter we discuss how camps were established there and how their inmates were deployed.

Unter den Eichen; in June 1942 the detachment was transferred to Wismarer Straße and subsequently enlarged; as from June 1943, around 1,500 camp inmates were deployed in some fifty detachments on SS building sites throughout the city, as well as on private work for members of the SS.

<sup>100</sup> See Budraß, *Flugzeugindustrie*, 775–87. The number of camp inmates deployed at the Oranienburger works rose sharply from 800 in September 1942 to 6,966 in June 1944, *ibid.* 778.

### III. Urban Satellite Concentration Camps

#### I. THE PERPETRATORS: ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS

MAYORS played, not by chance, a prominent part in negotiations on the deployment of camp inmates. That role was determined not only by their position as heads of municipal administrations but by the specific function assigned to them as directors of emergency measures for bomb damage clearance and repair in the Reich. The '18th directive of the general plenipotentiary for management of the building sector', issued by Reich minister Fritz Todt on 16 January 1941, was intended to ensure that clearance and repair work after air raids was carried out as efficiently as possible and with a minimum of friction. In a document explaining the background to the directive, we read: 'Enemy air raids have recently concentrated heavily on the residential areas of German cities. The Führer has expressed the wish that the sections of the population affected should, as a matter of the highest priority, be relieved at least of their material worries. This means, among other things, rapid repair and clearance of bomb and fire damage caused by air raids.'<sup>1</sup> The authority responsible for this was the central body for management of the German construction industry, known by its German abbreviation 'GB-Bau', which was set up by Hermann Göring in December 1938 under the Four-Year Plan, with Todt in charge as general plenipotentiary. After Todt's death on 9 February 1942, GB-Bau was taken over by Speer. It was GB-Bau that took the decisions, by deploying contingents of construction workers, on the implementation of building measures in the Reich. Since the beginning of the war GB-Bau regional commissioners, whose areas of responsibility were based on the military districts, had been responsible for overseeing all armament-related construction projects, coordinating regional damage repair work, and supervising the construction of air-raid shelters. From December 1942 these responsibilities were assigned to Gau commissioners for GB-Bau in the NSDAP party regions.<sup>2</sup> By his '18th directive', Todt transferred responsibility for emergency measures to the city mayors. Their task was to assess the possibilities for rapid repair of damage to residential buildings and put the work in hand. Damage to transport installations, supply facilities, postal installations, and industrial undertakings was a matter for the relevant administrations and armament detachments. The police chiefs locally in charge of air-raid protection, and the personnel under their authority, were henceforth no longer responsible for long-term clearance

<sup>1</sup> City of Cologne, 'Die Beseitigung baulicher Fliegerschäden in Köln', October 1942, 16–17 (reprinted with implementing regulations), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/46.

<sup>2</sup> Seidler, Fritz Todt, 203–6; Romeyk, *Verwaltungs- und Behördengeschichte*, 147–9.

and repair work. Their role was confined to eliminating immediate dangers caused by air raids and to digging out bodies from bombed buildings.

As a rule, it was the directors of emergency measures who were the authorities in charge of concentration-camp inmates. Cologne provides a good example of the relevant administrative structure.<sup>3</sup> Its mayor, Robert Brandes, who was born in Wolfenbüttel in 1899, took charge as director of emergency measures. He was a former government-certified architect and Party activist, who had headed the municipal building department since July 1942. Brandes also held regional and supraregional offices in various building sectors. Since August 1934, for example, he had been head of the 'Gau housing office' in the Gau administration. He was also Gau commissioner for GB-Bau for Cologne-Aachen and led the Gau task force for nationwide coordination of damage repair, which included representatives of the regional labour and economic affairs offices and the Luftwaffe regional command. In his capacity as Cologne's director of emergency measures, Brandes relied on the building administration, specifically: the structural engineering and building inspection departments, the housing and residential planning department, the machinery and equipment department, and the curator. The 'office for war-essential deployment of manpower and building materials', headed by the director of administration, August Lentzen, was of special importance in carrying out emergency measures. Lentzen coordinated all damage clearance and repair tasks in the manpower, supplies, building materials, and transport departments. According to an inventory of tasks drawn up in 1942, the manpower department was responsible for: 'directing deployment of the workforce, building contractors, and craftsmen; securing the services of domestic and foreign building contractors, craftsmen (under the Reich deployment programme), troops, prisoners of war, foreign workers; processing tenders for the clearance and repair of air-raid building damage, except such minor damage as can be dealt with immediately by workmen; approving the designation of emergency measures.' The tasks of the supplies department were: 'providing accommodation for German labour (building contractors, workmen supplied under the Reich deployment programme), foreign labour (workmen, building contractors), and prisoners of war; supplying the foregoing with food from municipal or NSV kitchens; helping to supply food to air-raid victims; settling accounts with firms and craftsmen for the deployment of troops and prisoners of war.'<sup>4</sup>

The administrative structure was basically the same in other cities and municipalities of the Reich, varying in most cases only slightly as to precise departmental demarcation. The coordination of clearance work was generally

<sup>3</sup> See Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 35–8.

<sup>4</sup> 'Die Beseitigung baulicher Fliegerschäden in Köln', October 1942, 7, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/46. This administrative structure lasted until the end of the war, see action plan of 25 May 1944, HStAK, Acc. 229, No. 431.



assigned to the building departments, and the deployment of manpower, whether German workers or concentration-camp inmates, was part of their ordinary business. On a day-to-day basis, therefore, the camp inmates were dealt with by specialist staff in building departments rather than prominent National Socialist officials.

The building department specialists' negotiating partners with regard to the deployment of camp inmates were members of their own profession: architects and engineers from Section C 'Building & Construction', whom the WHVA had put in charge of the SS construction brigades. In his draft plan for the establishment of SS construction brigades, written in February 1942, Kammler, the head of the WHVA's Section C, proposed that 'SS construction brigade units shall be led by SS commanders with— if possible— training in building and construction, appointed as *Sonderführer* (wartime specialists).'<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in contrast to other types of satellite concentration camp, the command personnel of an SS construction brigade was recruited from Section C, whereas the camp inmates and SS squads were the responsibility of Section D 'Concentration Camps'. In practical terms, this meant that Section C took the decisions on type, duration, and place of deployment, and on numbers of inmates, while Section D supplied the inmates and guard units, and took care of the associated administrative tasks. The remit and powers of an SS commander in the construction brigades were essentially those of a camp commandant in the concentration camps.<sup>6</sup>

All the commanders of the first SS construction brigades were graduate engineers or architects and long-standing members of the NSDAP or SS, and had relevant experience of SS building projects or concentration-camp management. Gerhard Weigel, who negotiated quartering, remuneration, and guarding, as well as the deployment of camp inmates from SS Construction Brigade II, is a good example.<sup>7</sup> He was born on 23 February 1908 in Flöha, a town in Saxony, the son of a senior tax inspector. After training as a plumber and heating mechanic, he worked first as a technician in Chemnitz for a year. In 1927 to 1928 he attended the Higher German Technical College of Metalworking and Installation Technology and was employed until 1930 as a heating engineer in Bautzen. In 1933, after several years' unemployment, Weigel landed a Party post that put him back on his feet.<sup>8</sup> He had joined the Hitler Youth (then an offshoot of the SA) back in 1926 at the age of 16. In 1929 he joined the Bautzen branch of the SA, and went over to the SS in 1930. In the pre-1933 period of the 'struggle for power', Weigel, who liked to put his nationality down as 'Saxon, German', distinguished himself in street fights and beer-hall brawls. His profile matches that of the concentration-camp commandants,

<sup>5</sup> BA NS 19/14, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Orth, *Die Konzentrationslager-SS*, 38–40; Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', ch. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Note dated 7 Oct. 1942, repr. in *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, 220, StA Bremen, 4, 29/1–1307.

<sup>8</sup> See BA BDC/PK, RS, SSO and ZSL IV 406 AR 245/69, 15–40.

predominantly middle-class members of the 'war youth generation', most of whom joined the NSDAP or SS before 1930.<sup>9</sup>

Weigel established his professional career as an engineer in the camps. In 1934 he worked in Sachsenburg concentration camp. After its closure, he moved to Weimar, where he was employed until March 1938 as a camp engineer on the construction of Buchenwald concentration camp. For a short time he also worked in Sachsenhausen concentration camp and in the building department of the SS Administration Office. From July 1938 to the end of 1941 Weigel supervised, inter alia, SS construction sites in Linz and Klagenfurt. He then joined the SS building inspectorate in Dachau under the command of the senior SS and police leader for the Reich South area. In January 1942 he took over as head of the building inspectorate in Kiev under the senior SS and police leader for Russia South. So Gerhard Weigel had plenty of experience of the operation of concentration camps and SS building activities when, on 25 September 1942, he was put in charge of SS Construction Brigade II and its 1,000 inmates from Neuengamme.

Weigel ran SS Construction Brigade II for about a year and a half. In an extremely favourable performance assessment, Kammler stressed not only his subordinate's 'extensive experience in dealing with difficult technical situations', but also his 'constant vigilance, high organizational talent, and willingness to take responsibility through swift, decisive action in numerous, often risky individual cases . . . W. has been an active SS commander since November 1935 and has conducted himself irreproachably throughout. His strong ideological commitment and strict military bearing inspire the trust of his superiors and subordinates.'<sup>10</sup> So Weigel was predestined for the new task which Kammler assigned to him from early 1944, namely command of the newly established SS Construction Brigade V, comprising 2,500 camp inmates, which was to work on the construction of bunkers for V-weapons in Normandy. Barely half a year later Weigel, since promoted SS-Sturm-bannführer, was appointed 'inspector of all SS construction brigades', which made him one of the most prominent figures in charge of satellite camps.

For both the camps in Weigel's immediate area of responsibility, i.e. SS Construction Brigades II and V, there is documentary evidence of numerous deaths. From October 1942 to March 1943, when 750 inmates in SS Construction Brigade II were stationed in Bremen and another 250 in Osnabrück, 217 of them died—not just of hunger or illness but also as a result of criminal violence.<sup>11</sup> After 1945 Weigel, like the other construction brigade commanders, was not held legally responsible for a single death. As an SS commander he negotiated with the authorities and directed the deployment of camp inmates,

<sup>9</sup> Orth, *Die Konzentrationslager-SS*, 87–90.

<sup>10</sup> ZSL IV 406 AR 245/69, 37. The assessment—like certain other documents the Document Center made available to the Ludwigsburg public prosecutor's office—is no longer to be found in the BDC file on Weigel in the Federal Archives. The files were presumably 'tidied up' in the course of the investigations.

<sup>11</sup> Figures from Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', tables 4 and 5.

but was seen by them in person far less frequently than the SS guard units under his command.

Since the acts covered by a statute of limitations from October 1968 onwards included being an accessory to murder, Weigel would have had to have been proven personally responsible for the death of an inmate. Because the investigations were instigated so late and many inmates had died in the meantime, efforts to prove this were fruitless. In fact, Weigel was not questioned on events in SS Construction Brigade II until January 1969, in the course of investigations conducted by the Central Office of Judicial Administration (ZSL) in Ludwigsburg. Weigel had the investigators come to a building site of his current employer in Dortmund in order to question him. He adopted the same strategy in his statements as all other SS construction brigade commanders: he insisted that, in his capacity as construction brigade commander, he had had nothing to do with concentration-camp inmates.<sup>12</sup> Questioned again two months later, he continued to conceal his many years' activity in concentration camps: 'In May 1938 I was transferred via Munich to the SS Special Service Force (*SS-Verfügungstruppe*, *SS-VT*) in Klagenfurt. I was assigned to Section C, which only had to do with building and construction. From this unit, I was later also deployed on the construction of V-1 and V-2 launch bunkers and on railway construction brigades, as well as on urgent war work. In 1944 I was promoted *Sturmabführer*. During the war I worked, inter alia, in the Bremen and Hamburg areas.'<sup>13</sup> Although the investigating official recorded in the minutes that Weigel appeared 'uneasy and nervous' and 'gave the impression of a man who had a great deal to hide about his past in the Nazi period',<sup>14</sup> even he was unable to shake Weigel's interrogation strategy. Weigel was questioned for the last time in 1972, as a witness. On that occasion he claimed that his activity in the construction brigades had been conducted in close cooperation with the Wehrmacht authorities. As inspector of SS construction brigades, he said, he had directed only the railway construction brigades, and had accordingly had his office in the Reich ministry of transport.<sup>15</sup> Since Weigel was never accused of murder by former camp inmates, no legal action was taken against him.

Weigel's biography has been described here in detail for two reasons. First, he is a quintessential example of the men Hans Kammler selected to run the 'urban' camps: proven SS officers whose professional qualifications, political rank, and strong personal ties with the SS made them exceptionally suitable for negotiations with municipal building administrations.<sup>16</sup> There are thus likely to have been few barriers to cooperation between the SS officers in Section C of the WVHA and representatives of the municipal building departments,

<sup>12</sup> Interrogation of Gerhard Weigel, 24 Jan. 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR 245/69, 147-8.

<sup>13</sup> Interrogation of Gerhard Weigel, 25 Mar. 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR-Z 207/73, 135.

<sup>14</sup> Interrogation of Gerhard Weigel, 25 Mar. 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR-Z 207/73, 137.

<sup>15</sup> Interrogation of Gerhard Weigel, 27 June 1972, ZSL IV 406 AR-Z 207/73, 197-9.

<sup>16</sup> For further examples, see Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ'.

given their common professional background. Both were equally convinced of the need to deploy camp inmates, although rubble clearance was for one side a part of the provision of public services and for the other a political task.

The second reason is that Weigel, like the members of the municipal building administrations, is also representative of the technical elite who were able to claim successfully after 1945 that they had been engaged in purely 'apolitical' activities during the Nazi period. It would have occurred to no one in the post-war years to enquire into the individual role of members of municipal administrations in the deployment of concentration-camp inmates. The relevant activities were part and parcel of their daily duties, and camp inmates were only one group among many deployed on clearance and repair work. Since no criminal proceedings were initiated, and those who had been involved in the deployment of concentration-camp inmates had no interest in speaking of it, the practical organization of cooperation with the SS is hard to comprehend. Such testimony as we have is combined with the exculpatory discourse exemplified in the writings of Albert Speer.<sup>17</sup>

On the basis of the biographies of men like August Lentzen, head of Cologne's office for the deployment of war-essential manpower and building materials, who remained in the city's structural engineering department after 1945 and eventually became senior director of administration, we may at least conclude that the careers of persons in such positions were not disrupted as a result of their wartime activities.<sup>18</sup> Like the SS commanders of the construction brigades, they were able to continue professionally 'almost as if the 8th of May 1945 had never happened'.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SATELLITE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Himmler's apparatus put the decisions taken at the meeting of 15 and 16 September 1942 into effect within barely four weeks. SS Construction Brigade I was formed from inmates of Sachsenhausen concentration camp, of whom 600 were allocated to Düsseldorf and 400 to Duisburg. Construction Brigade II consisted of Neuengamme inmates: 750 were dispatched to Bremen and 250 to Osnabrück. The first two brigades took up their quarters around the middle of October 1942. Meanwhile, in September, Cologne had already received an advance detachment of the 1,000 Buchenwald concentration-camp inmates assigned to it as SS Construction Brigade III.<sup>20</sup> All these satellite camps were composed of non-Jewish male inmates, mostly of eastern European nationality. Each contained a small group of German camp trustees (*Funktionshäftlinge*). The choice of cities resulted from Himmler's reconnaissance trip, but lobbying by Gauleiters and mayors also played a part and explains why SS Construction

<sup>17</sup> Speer, *Third Reich; id., Slave State*.

<sup>18</sup> Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 161.

<sup>19</sup> Hortleder, *Das Gesellschaftsbild*, 170. Thanks are due to Bernd-A. Rusinek for the reference.

<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the following is based on Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', ch. 2.

Brigade III was the first to reach its destination and Cologne received the largest quota of camp inmates. On the other hand, the decision to allocate a contingent to Osnabrück was taken at short notice following an air raid on 6 October 1942, the prisoners having been originally intended for Wilhelmshaven.

In this section we shall discuss the general framework conditions under which the urban camps were established, and what special arrangements were developed for them in practice. In preparation for the deployment of camp inmates, the respective camp commandants—namely Gerhard Weigel for SS Construction Brigade II, SS-Hauptsturmführer Maximilian List for SS Construction Brigade I, and SS-Obersturmführer Karl Wilhelm Völkner for SS Construction Brigade III—travelled to the cities concerned, briefed the relevant administrative departments, and notified them of the conditions for deployment of the inmates. In the case of Bremen, a file note has survived which informs us what Weigel told the recording clerk on 5 October 1942: the inmates were to be employed as far as possible on large bomb sites, with the surrounding streets closed to traffic and accessible only to residents with special passes; it was forbidden for camp inmates to work together with civilians, soldiers, prisoners of war, or criminal convicts; a daily flat rate of 4–6 Reichsmarks would have to be paid for each inmate: the average working day would be 12 hours, and inmates would also have to work on Sundays. Weigel intended to ask Bremen's police chief for additional guards. He had already inspected a barrack camp and certified it as suitable accommodation. Weigel expected the city to bear the costs of food and accommodation and to fit out the barracks with beds, kitchen equipment, etc. He hoped to be able to bring the inmates to Bremen by the end of the week.<sup>21</sup>

The tremendous pace set by the SS put the municipal administrations under considerable pressure to take action. Facts were created even before contracts had been signed. But precisely because of bad experience with the POW battalions, Cologne, for example, insisted on a written contract to guard against unforeseen costs. It wanted to provide only accommodation and fixed items of equipment, with the WVHA paying for all other items, such as blankets, crockery, office equipment, and cleaning materials.<sup>22</sup> By January 1943, i.e. three months after the camp inmates had arrived and despite repeated reminders from the city authorities, there was still no written contract. Meanwhile, Cologne took the position that the daily rate it was paying per inmate included all the construction brigade's expenditure on accommodation, food, medical care, and administration, and that, accordingly, no further costs should accrue to the city administration.<sup>23</sup> It seems not to have been the only city that wanted its cooperation with the WVHA to be settled contractually. According to Karl Sommer, in charge of manpower deployment in Section D

<sup>21</sup> File note, 7 Oct. 1942, StA Bremen, 4, 29/1–1307, repr. in *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, 220.

<sup>22</sup> See letter to DGT, 4 Dec. 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 53/701.

<sup>23</sup> See letter from City of Cologne's office for the deployment of war-essential labour and building materials to Dr Plaza, garrison doctor, Buchenwald concentration camp, 11 Dec. 1942,

of the WVHA, there were disputes, sometimes quite heated, with municipal authorities that lasted for months.<sup>24</sup> Yet the positions of the parties were not so far apart that they could not be bridged. In the end a solution was found that was not far removed from the position defended by the municipalities. The cities were responsible for 'supplying properly secure accommodation, including lighting, heating and water, for the inmates and guard units'<sup>25</sup> and had to provide 'panel doctors'. The camp administrations drew up monthly invoices for work performed by inmates, broken down by day and number of inmates deployed.<sup>26</sup> The cities paid a daily rate of 4 Reichsmarks for unskilled labour and 6 Reichsmarks for skilled workers, i.e. the rates generally in force for SS external manpower from 1 October 1942. The camp administrations transferred the income to the Reich exchequer, while the cities in turn charged the sums in question to the war damage offices of the Reich ministry of finance.<sup>27</sup>

While building departments were still pondering a suitable charging method, the first inmates had already been shot at the perimeter fences of the camps inside the towns. The accounting procedures for camp inmates clearly illustrate the relationship of functional coexistence established between legal uniformity, i.e. traditional bureaucracy, and exceptional law. While the traditional bureaucracy repeatedly came under pressure from extra-normative 'leader power' (*Führergewalt*), it continued to fulfil a system-stabilizing function, in that 'it was nevertheless able to ensure that the administrative structure was in sufficient order round and about such anomalous enclaves to prevent any legal vacuum and irregularity from becoming extensive enough to endanger the regime'.<sup>28</sup>

All five cities that received SS construction brigades in autumn 1942 had to find suitable accommodation for camp inmates at very short notice. In most cases the municipal administrations resorted to existing buildings or barracks, apparently encountering little difficulty in persuading the previous tenants of the need to reallocate the premises. Without exception, the camps were located close to city centres, sometimes in the heart of residential districts, or could at least be observed with no great difficulty. In Düsseldorf the 600 inmates in SS Construction Brigade I were quartered south of the city centre

HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 9, 407; note from City of Cologne *re* amount and charging of remuneration for the deployment of military units on bomb damage clearance, 9 Jan. 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 53/701.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Sommer, affidavit, 8 Oct. 1946 (= NI-1066), quoted in Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung', 281.

<sup>25</sup> Letter of 26 Apr. 1944 from SS-WVHA, Amt D II to Amt W I, HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 10, 291. The letter concerned the establishment of a Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke labour detachment in Düsseldorf.

<sup>26</sup> For examples of such billing documents, see HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 222.

<sup>27</sup> Payments for the services of concentration-camp inmates were made to a Reichbankstelle account in Weiden and transferred from there to Berlin. To date, there has been no investigation into the amount of those payments. Tuchel, *Die Inspektion*, 142–9, also gives only a few examples. There is no information on the matter in Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit*.

<sup>28</sup> Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 128.



on Stoffeler Kapellenweg.<sup>29</sup> The Düsseldorf roads department had applied to build a camp on the site in January 1942 to accommodate prisoners of war intended for deployment on the construction of air-raid shelters. Only a few yards from the enclosed barrack camp was the Haus Kolvenbach inn, which stayed open for business. There was heavy pedestrian traffic around the camp, which was very close to a popular park (the *Volksgarten*), the Stoffeler cemetery, and a set of allotments. The 400 inmates of SS Construction Brigade I's branch camp in Duisburg were also quartered in an enclosed barrack camp. On the corner of Kornstraße and Emmericherstraße in the Meiderich district—as a resident of that time recalls—four barracks of the Reich labour service were erected almost overnight, and another four or five were added in the following months.<sup>30</sup> The branch camp was located in the middle of a residential district, and the windows of the neighbouring houses looked straight into it.

In choosing the site of a satellite camp, particular attention was paid to whether the buildings and grounds could be secured against attempted escapes. Although the barrack camp on Warturner Heerstraße for the 750 inmates from SS Construction Brigade II allocated to Bremen had been chosen by Weigel in person, there appear to have been several attempted escapes from the beginning. Of the many inmates who died during the first weeks of the temporary camp's existence, at least four are recorded as 'shot while attempting to escape'.<sup>31</sup> This fact must have been known to the Bremen office for the deployment of war-essential manpower, since it was engaged in looking for a permanent site. On 31 August 1943 Bremen's senator for building and construction recalled that 'the camp at the Hindenburg Barracks, originally built for the DAF by Reich minister Speer's plenipotentiary for armaments Inspectorate X (Hamburg), was acquired as final accommodation *because it met the stricter requirements set for the guarding of concentration-camp inmates [sic!]*'.<sup>32</sup> The camp inmates were accordingly transferred to the Hindenburg Barracks on Boßdorferstraße, whose stables had been enlarged by the DAF, and more barracks were erected on the same site for SS quarters, toilets, canteens, and kitchens.

Where no barrack camps or other buildings already intended as camps were available, the municipal administrations used public buildings rendered unsuitable for their original purpose by war damage. In Osnabrück the Overberg School was converted to take the 250 inmates of SS Construction Brigade II's branch camp.<sup>33</sup> It was situated on Overbergstraße, in the middle of a residential district. The inmates slept in the gymnasium, located between the two wings of the building. In one of the wings, only the basement could

<sup>29</sup> See Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, especially the aerial photograph on p. 199 and the documents reproduced on pp. 194–8 concerning the building of the camp.

<sup>30</sup> *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 11–12.

<sup>31</sup> Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', table 4.

<sup>32</sup> Letter of 31 Aug. 1943 from the senator for building and construction to the Bremen registry office, AGN, Ng. 6 Apr. 92 (emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> See sketches and statements in ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74.



be used, the rest having been destroyed by a bomb. The basement housed the bath, a storeroom, and the kitchen of a cookery school. The other wing contained the boiler room, the inmates' kitchen, a sick bay, a small workroom, and a windowless partition. The ground floor of this wing served as SS quarters and as a guard room for local police reservists assigned to the guard unit. The school yard was used as a parade ground. The caretaker of the Overberg School continued in his duties. In the cookery school, too, classes for various Osnabrück school groups continued as before.

This mixed use of the school is at odds with the image of a strictly isolated concentration camp or an enclosed satellite camp. Yet Osnabrück was not a one-off case. In the building which the Cologne authorities made available for SS Construction Brigade III, life also went on as usual in the immediate vicinity of the inmates. In addition to SS camp commandant Karl Völkner, the commandant of Buchenwald concentration camp, Hermann Pister, was presumably also involved in selecting the building, since he accompanied the advance detachment of 300 inmates that reached Cologne on 21 September 1942.<sup>34</sup> The satellite camp was set up on the city's exhibition grounds in Deutz, on the right bank of the Rhine, on land belonging to Messe- und Ausstellungsgesellschaft m.b.H, a company in which the city of Cologne had a 60 per cent holding. It was thus located in the middle of town, directly opposite the main tourist attraction, Cologne cathedral, and was easily reached from the city centre via the Hohenzollern bridge. As well as being convenient for road traffic, the exhibition grounds had a direct rail link to Deutz-Tief railway station, so that convoys of camp inmates had only to be led over a narrow street.

In Cologne, as in the other cities, the first inmates had to do the camp conversion and expansion work themselves. The congress hall on the banks of the Rhine in the north-western corner of the rectangular exhibition complex (now the 'Rheinsaal') was fitted with three-tiered wooden platforms and equipped with beds, cupboards, and tables. An access door was blocked off, the tall windows were partly bricked in or boarded up, and a refectory and changing room were created on the ground floor. The area around the congress hall and the exhibition tower, enclosed by barbed wire and watchtowers, was used as a roll-call square. The outside of the perimeter fence was patrolled by SS guards with dogs. The offices and day rooms of the camp administration and SS units were located in the exhibition grounds tower, and their living quarters in an adjoining part of the building.

Although the part of the exhibition complex constituting the satellite concentration camp was closed off, the neighbouring buildings continued to be used for various purposes. In 1942 six private individuals were still living in the middle of the complex, near the Great Hall. From the description of their professions in the local address book, it would seem they were responsible for maintenance of the exhibition facilities. The administration building on Messeplatz (Exhibition Square) housed the office of the exhibition company,

<sup>34</sup> The following is based on Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 51–4.

as well as the municipal public relations office and the exhibition halls, conference rooms, and municipal businesses department. There was a fire station in the southern part of the West Hall and a police station in the southern part of the East Hall. The catering firm Blatzheim-Betriebe ran catering services at the *Rheingaststätte* on the banks of the Rhine and in the car park building in the green space to the north of the exhibition complex.

The choice of the exhibition grounds for the satellite camp was no accident: they had gradually been transformed into a 'terrain of terror' starting in 1939—not without the assistance of the municipal authorities. In October 1939 Polish prisoners of war were interned in part of the grounds, and French POWs followed in May 1940. A POW battalion was also quartered temporarily in the exhibition centre. In May 1940 the grounds were also used to set up a transit camp for the deportation of 1,000 Roma and Sinti from the Rhineland, and from autumn 1941 mass deportations of the Jewish population were carried out from there. After the spring fair in 1942, when the propaganda ministry banned trade fairs throughout the Reich for the duration of the war, the remainder of the building complex was used for the same purpose: an 'eastern workers' camp and a DAF forced-labour camp. About the same time as the satellite concentration camp was established, the Cologne state police authority began building an 'auxiliary police prison' in this camp complex. As we shall see, particularly close connections developed between these two camps. At times, several thousand people were housed at the same time in the various camps. So it was only logical that Cologne's director of emergency measures maintained an office in the exhibition centre, as a base from which to assign camp inmates, prisoners of war, and forced labourers to their worksites.

Although Himmler had at first limited the deployment of SS construction brigades to a few weeks, the camps remained on their sites for at least five months—a year and a half in the case of Cologne. Since most of them had been set up on a temporary basis, the living conditions for inmates were poor—from the sleeping berths, of which there were often not enough, to the insufficient blankets and crockery, inadequate sanitary facilities, and ragged inmates' clothing, which was worn to shreds in the course of their work on the rubble. The lack of air-raid shelters was particularly serious. Not only were the inmates subjected to violence, they lived in constant fear of dying in the next bombing raid, since in most of the camps makeshift anti-shrapnel trenches provided the only cover. During daytime attacks the inmates instinctively took refuge in buildings near their worksites, despite the risk of being shot as escapees. Concentration-camp inmates were generally not allowed into air-raid shelters. In Bremen, where six inmates died in an air raid on 6 April 1943, the police chief, in his capacity as local director of air-raid protection, made sure no one allowed a camp inmate into an air-raid shelter.<sup>35</sup> In Cologne someone hit on the idea of moving around half of the 1,300 inmates who were there in

<sup>35</sup> MarBolek and Ott, *Bremen*, 358, 417–18.

the summer of 1943 away in a ship, which moored on the Rhine 6.5 kilometres away from the city. This was to ensure that after a raid there would always be enough prisoners available for the clearance work.

From 1943 onwards the infrastructure of the western and north-western cities deteriorated appreciably as a result of the continuous heavy air raids. The condition of the construction brigade camps also worsened. In the night of 26/7 April 1943 the Duisburg barrack camp was completely destroyed by Allied bombing. Thirty inmates were killed and another twenty-eight wounded.<sup>36</sup> The branch camp, since reassigned to SS Construction Brigade III, was then transferred to the Deacon Institute (*Diakonenanstalt*) at Kühlenwall 64. This building, which stood among ruins in the city centre, was in a pitiful state. It had been largely destroyed in summer 1942 and only partly repaired as accommodation for eastern workers. During the first weeks the construction brigade inmates had to repair the deaconry building so as to be able to sleep in the former infirmary. Engelbert Oberhauser, who was transferred from Buchenwald to Duisburg in summer 1943 together with another inmate, testified to the disastrous situation: 'The inmates' accommodation had only a makeshift covering of planks and papier-mâché. The whole roof truss had been burnt to cinders. Some of the inmates, who included a few German camp trustees, wore striped camp garb, but most were dressed only in tattered remnants of civilian clothing. Most of them were Soviet and Polish SS slave labourers . . . We made the acquaintance of our filthy, lice-ridden, half-starved companions at evening roll-call. Their knees protruded from torn trousers, and in many cases their naked buttocks. They came from work on demolishing ruined buildings, clearing rubble, and defusing unexploded bombs. We two were dressed in the new striped clothing we had been issued for the convoy. When we got into line to be counted off, we stood out like a pair of lords in a crowd of tramps.'<sup>37</sup>

While the inmates had to go out to work every day for the municipal administration, their accommodation, which was the responsibility of the municipal authorities and not the SS, remained in an unsatisfactory condition for months on end. As late as September 1943 we read in a decidedly optimistic inspection report by the Buchenwald camp doctor, SS-Obersturmführer Heinrich Plaza: 'The inmates' quarters were at first badly damaged by air raids, so accommodation conditions were poor. As a result, the camp became infested with lice. A delousing room has been installed to remedy the situation. It has just been finished and will go into operation this week. In addition, a very well-appointed and adequate shower room has been built, which will also be ready for use in a few days' time. The kitchen was located temporarily in a fairly cramped space, but this problem too is being dealt with. A new kitchen, nicely laid out and very hygienic, is under construction and will be ready in the very near future.'<sup>38</sup> It is more than doubtful whether there was

<sup>36</sup> See documents in *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 19–21.

<sup>37</sup> Report by Engelbert Oberhauser, 29 June 1971, SGB, 62–86–1.

<sup>38</sup> KL Buchenwald, camp doctor, 6 Sept. 1943, HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 9, 290.

any real improvement in conditions for the inmates. In Duisburg the number of deaths continued to rise, whereas in the Cologne camp it dropped appreciably in the course of 1943. In addition to the 30 killed in the air raid of 26 April 1943, at least 49 more inmates in SS Construction Brigade III died in the Duisburg branch camp. Of these, 15 were killed defusing bombs, 2 were fatally injured during rubble clearance, and for 20 the cause of death was given as pneumonic tuberculosis or cachexia (acute fatigue characterized by general debility and anaemia). Four were 'shot while attempting to escape', and in one case the cause of death was given as 'suicide by hanging'.<sup>39</sup>

With regard to the provision of care in the satellite camps discussed here, we may conclude overall that in all areas for which the municipal administrations were directly responsible, the under-provision typical of the concentration camps predominated. This applies not only to accommodation, which we have already discussed, but also to food and medical care. That the camp inmates suffered from hunger was obvious to anyone who saw the squads of inmates at work in the cities or walking through the streets. A police reservist assigned to guarding camp inmates in Osnabrück testified after 1945: 'The prisoners were always hungry. Their rations must have been insufficient.'<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of 1942, i.e. barely two weeks after the already weakened inmates were brought from Neuengamme to Osnabrück, 50 to 60 were in such poor physical condition that they were deemed unfit for work.<sup>41</sup> Only in a few cases did municipal administrations supply extra food. In Cologne an additional midday meal was distributed after a mass air raid in July 1944, when inmates from Construction Brigade III had to work in a cemetery for several days in very hot weather putting corpses in coffins and burying them.<sup>42</sup> In any event, a permanent additional provision for inmates in excess of the usual rations would not have encountered objections from the SS camp authorities. On the contrary, it would have been welcomed as a means of improving work output. A WVHA report on the deployment of SS construction brigades for the period July–September 1943 mentions approvingly that the city of Bremen had supplied the satellite camp with extra food 'as a reward for its excellent work output'.<sup>43</sup> Whether and to what extent the extra rations were actually distributed to the inmates or misappropriated is of course another matter.

A whole series of middle- and lower-level administrative authorities were officially involved in catering for camp inmates—and not just for the satellite concentration camps but for the main camps too. For example, ration coupons for the camps were issued by the local food supply offices.<sup>44</sup> It transpires from correspondence with Neuengamme concentration camp in the winter of 1944/5 that the factory inspectorate or the medical association could also

<sup>39</sup> See table in Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 224–35.

<sup>40</sup> Interrogation of Heinrich B., 20 July 1950, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 52.

<sup>41</sup> Bringmann, 'Häftlinge', 44.

<sup>42</sup> Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 91.

<sup>43</sup> BA NS 19/14, 27.

<sup>44</sup> See also Steinbacher, *Dachau*, 127–9.

influence the provision of food to inmates.<sup>45</sup> On one occasion Neuengamme concentration camp requested milk supplements for inmates exposed to toxic gases when working at the brickworks. In respect of that request, the 'camp supplies department' of the factory inspectorate noted, with no further explanation, that the conditions for such distribution were not satisfied. The food and agriculture authority accordingly rejected the request. On another occasion Neuengamme concentration camp ordered white bread for inmates with stomach troubles, whereupon the food and agriculture authority sought the opinion of the medical association. These examples show that the social space around the concentration camps was a lot larger than depicted in the post-war period. By no means did it end at the enclosure fence.

The WVHA had also provided the cities with opportunities to influence the provision of medical care. When it came to the establishment of sick bays, there was a tough battle with the municipal administrations, which sought to block any provision for the camps that they did not regard as absolutely essential. Here again, Cologne proved a stubborn negotiating partner.<sup>46</sup> When organizing establishment of the sick bay in the Cologne exhibition complex, the medical orderly assigned to Construction Brigade III, SS-Oberscharführer Gustav Schmidt, was instructed by camp doctor Heinrich Plaza to request the city of Cologne, which had commissioned the deployment of camp inmates, to provide the extra equipment needed and to supply the camp with certain medicines that were difficult to obtain in Cologne. When Schmidt negotiated the matter with senior municipal inspector Josef Signon of the Cologne war damage office on 26 October 1942, Signon refused to pay for medication and bandages. Plaza found himself obliged to complain once again to the municipal authorities in November 1942, following which he was promised, at least, the equipment he had requested. But the sick bay still lacked basic materials such as bandages, disinfectant, and a scalpel. Despite the miserable medical provision for inmates, however, the municipal authorities remained adamant that they would pay only the fixed rate for manpower deployment and should not incur any further costs.

Clearly, the municipal administration's genuine concern to control costs was a prime factor in the negotiations. However, its behaviour cannot be attributed to 'means-end rationality' alone. There were certainly also political reasons why municipal administrations kept the provision of equipment for satellite concentration camps, and food and care for their inmates, to an absolute minimum: they preferred, for example, to allocate scarce resources first and foremost to the victims of air raids. But to sustain this argument, it must be shown that there was in fact room for manoeuvre that could have been used to improve the situation of camp inmates. The fact remains that, for each individual inmate, the cities' reluctance to act in the face of the special circumstances of his imprisonment reduced his chances of survival.

<sup>45</sup> For examples see StA Hamburg, 377-10 I, A b VII 4d.

<sup>46</sup> Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 119-20.

While the municipalities did not enter upon the terrain opened up by the SS, they allowed the latter to impinge on their own areas of responsibility. This was especially true of all the procedures the SS enforced in the field of civil status law to make sure the causes of death of camp inmates were not properly monitored. Under existing law, cremation was possible only in accordance with the expressed wish of the deceased or his family, and provided the cause of death was natural. Otherwise, police authorization was required for a corpse to be cremated.<sup>47</sup> In the places where large concentration camps were located, a practice deviating from the law in force was gradually established in order to prevent third parties gaining insight into the crimes committed against inmates. For Buchenwald concentration camp, for example, a separate register office designated 'Special Register Office Weimar II' was set up and began work on 1 April 1939. Following an agreement with the Weimar register office, all that was now needed for the registration of deaths and the cremation of corpses was a certificate from the head of the Weimar-Buchenwald infirmary.<sup>48</sup>

Deaths occurring in satellite camps were to be certified only by doctors specially designated for the purpose, so as to prevent the municipal bureaucracy getting involved. Under the supervision of Section D III 'Medical Service and Camp Hygiene' of the WVHA, the SS garrison doctors in the main camps accordingly organized selection of the doctors responsible for the care of camp inmates and SS troops.<sup>49</sup> A medical orderly, whose tasks included reporting deaths to the main camps, was seconded to the larger satellite camps. In addition, each garrison was assigned one doctor for SS troops and another for inmates. Special care was taken in appointing doctors for the inmates, since, as well as carrying out selections in the camps, they were also responsible for issuing death certificates. Carefully briefed as to the procedure to be followed, they had to enter a precise cause of death alongside the inmate's personal details and the time of death, and were dissuaded from entering causes such as 'internal injuries' or 'unknown' that were liable to raise further questions. In cases of suicide, photographs and sketches had to be attached, as well as statements by witnesses. Where the cause of death was given as 'shot while attempting to escape', witness statements were to be taken exclusively from the guard unit. In cases where violent death was suspected, the doctors had to fill in prescribed sections ending with the words 'any violent cause other than that described above can be definitely ruled out'. The corpses of inmates were not to be released for either anatomical or pathological examination.

<sup>47</sup> Law on Cremation, 15 May 1934, referred to in Schley, *Nachbar*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Schley, *Nachbar*, 48–9. From October 1943 the concentration-camp register offices no longer bothered to record the deaths of Soviet and Polish inmates, see WVHA circular to camp commandants, 20 Sept. 1943, BA NS 3/426, 89.

<sup>49</sup> The procedure is well documented in the plans for a construction brigade in Lübeck, see HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 8/I, 508–10. Those guidelines also applied to Cologne, see HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 9, 416–17.



Satellite camp deaths were recorded by the register offices of the relevant garrison towns.<sup>50</sup> In issuing the official death certificates, the register offices relied on the certificates signed by the doctors responsible for the inmates. In most cases, this task was assigned to locally resident doctors from the ranks of the SS. Yet despite all these efforts to conceal the causes of inmates' deaths, the cemetery employees responsible for cremating the bodies could see with their own eyes that the information on the death certificates was incompatible with the likely cause of death. As a senior municipal inspector employed at the Stoffeler cemetery in Düsseldorf declared in May 1946: 'Among the dead were many who had been shot or hanged. In most cases death certificates were attached testifying that the persons in question had died of cardiac insufficiency, heart failure, and suchlike.'<sup>51</sup>

In the case of the Osnabrück detachment of SS Construction Brigade II, the city's senior medical adviser, Dr O., and his deputy, Dr J., were assigned to the task.<sup>52</sup> Although it was part of their duties, neither appears to have concerned himself with medical care for the inmates. The first time one of the panel doctors showed up in the camp was in December 1942, after a fatal accident on a building site. And in the following months the doctor came to the camp only when certificates needed to be signed for inmates who had been 'shot while attempting to escape'.<sup>53</sup> The activities of the two Osnabrück medical officers appear to have been confined to issuing death certificates, since in 1950 Dr O. stated: 'As far as I know, no doctor attended the camp inmates; in any case, no medical care was provided either by Dr J. or by myself.'<sup>54</sup>

Of the total of over eighty death certificates issued for the satellite concentration camp in Osnabrück during the period October 1942 to April 1943, the majority were signed by J. and five or six by O. The doctors' post-war statements show that, for them, the ethical principles of their profession did not apply in the case of concentration-camp inmates. In 1950, J. testified that he had never set foot in the Overberg School: the death certificates, already filled in, had been submitted to him by an SS man, and he had signed them after viewing the bodies in the crematorium. The interrogator from the public prosecutor's office established that he had done so even when appearances suggested a different cause of death. Questioned about this, the doctor explained: 'At that time I saw many corpses of inmates from the concentration-camp detachment that were only skin and bones. I did not put down starvation as the cause of death because the symptoms, according to what I knew at

<sup>50</sup> In the case of two construction brigades, death certificates were included in the investigation files. For Osnabrück see ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 59; for Bremen, death certificates of the Bremen-Central registry office, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 209.

<sup>51</sup> See list reproduced in Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 202–11, and the interrogation of Julian von T., 7 May 1946, ZSL 410 AR 63/77, iv, bound record of proceedings.

<sup>52</sup> Testimony of Fritz B., 1950, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 29–39. See entries for both doctors in the address book of the city and district of Osnabrück 1938/1939, 288. Both were professionally active in Osnabrück after the war.

<sup>53</sup> Bringmann, 'Häftlinge', 45.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Dr O., 7 Oct. 1950, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 60.



the time about death from starvation, were different . . . I therefore put down other causes, such as circulatory disorder.'<sup>55</sup> The public prosecutor's office did also find five death certificates issued by J. where the cause of death was given as 'fracture of the skull' or 'shot through the head', but the bodies had been cremated without referral to the criminal police or a post-mortem examination. J. said at first that he could not remember any such cases. When confronted with the documents, he claimed the additional information had been inserted at a later stage. In his defence, he also claimed to have altered death certificates submitted to him many times.<sup>56</sup>

The behaviour of the two medical officers leads to a twofold conclusion that applies to many other individuals who had dealings with satellite concentration camps: the collapse of their general moral standards was just as rapid as their willingness to collaborate with the SS. The example of the two doctors also shows that individuals certainly did have detailed knowledge of the mass deaths in the camps and saw no reason to intervene in any way, even when there was the opportunity to do so.

The growth of SS power was all the less restrained as even the police and judicial apparatus had allowed the establishment of SS privileges and immunities.<sup>57</sup> Disciplinary rules did exist in the concentration camps,<sup>58</sup> laying down formal procedures to be followed for all punishment of prisoners. But in practice the SS operated in a twilight zone in which mistreatment and murder were immediately covered up. In October 1939 judicial proceedings against members of the SS were barred by the establishment of special SS and police jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup> In the satellite camps, too, the inmates were at the mercy of camp commanders and SS men subject to no outside control. With regard to the SS construction brigades, very few cases are known in which police investigations were initiated in response to the deaths of inmates, and in no single instance did they lead to criminal proceedings. For example, an attempt by Düsseldorf policemen to get a police investigation into the blatant murder of an inmate came to nothing. The inmate in question had been accused of attempting to escape while working on rubble clearance. As a punishment he was tied to a stake in the camp grounds and—this was in January 1943—hosed down with water. Next morning he was dead. The official cause of death was given as 'heart failure'. Local policemen on guard duty at the camp informed their superiors, but the investigation had no consequences for the SS. Those punished were the inmates who had told the police surgeon of the real cause of death.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Interrogation of Dr J., 3 Nov. 1950, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 68–9.

<sup>56</sup> Interrogation of Dr J., 3 Nov. 1950, ZSL IV 406 AR 221/74, 68–9, and death certificates, *ibid.* 59 (binder).

<sup>57</sup> See Steinbacher, *Dachau*, 153–8, and Schley, *Nachbar*, 86–92.

<sup>58</sup> The procedure developed in Dachau in 1933–4 (the 'Dachau model') served as a basis for all concentration camps, see Orth, *Das System*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Ordinance of 17 Oct. 1939 establishing special criminal jurisdiction for members of the SS and police units on special duties, see Gruchmann, *Justiz im Dritten Reich* (1988), 654–5.

<sup>60</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 112–13.

When it came to the establishment of concentration camps in towns and cities, the behaviour of the municipal administrations was marked overall by careful manoeuvring. In their own interests they strove to keep administrative procedures and the allocation of municipal resources to a minimum, even at the cost of conflict with representatives of the WVHA. At the same time, they shied away from anything that might impinge on the SS's monopoly of violence. This finding is of considerable significance for a subsequent estimate of whether the siting of a concentration camp in urban surroundings tended to 'brutalize the locality' or 'civilize the concentration camp'.<sup>61</sup>

### 3. 'LABOUR DEPLOYMENT'

The active role of municipal authorities in the establishment of satellite concentration camps—rather like their involvement with industrial firms—is not mentioned in post-war publications. Instead, their own involvement is exclusively portrayed as passive reaction. In a history of the city of Osnabrück, for example, we find: 'After a heavy air raid on 6 October 1942 . . . caused severe damage in the city centre, *concentration-camp inmates were assigned to clearance work*.'<sup>62</sup> It would be impossible to deny the involvement of at least the mayor of Osnabrück, Erich Gärtner, in the assignment of inmates. Gärtner had been the only mayor to speak publicly in Himmler's presence during the latter's tour of German cities at the beginning of September 1942. And in Osnabrück, where there was no state police administration, he was also the local director of air-raid protection. Reporting in that capacity on measures taken after the air raid of 6 October 1942, Gärtner stated that the municipal building department had taken over the task of rubble clearance and, in addition to prisoners of war, had deployed 'prisoners from a concentration camp, the *SS-Baupionierkompanie*'.<sup>63</sup> The camp inmates' labour provided appreciable support for the city of Osnabrück in repairing war damage, and in January 1943 the official war chronicle recorded that considerable progress had been made in rubble clearance thanks to the deployment of 250 concentration-camp inmates.<sup>64</sup>

In Osnabrück, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Duisburg, or Bremen, it was the same story: from autumn 1942 onwards, squads of camp inmates were marched into the cities. They worked mainly on clearance, salvage and fire-fighting tasks, the maintenance of war-essential industrial buildings and housing blocks, clearing main roads, and in the corpse collection squads. In addition, camp inmates were repeatedly requisitioned by the directors of emergency measures for special jobs such as unloading railway wagons and building temporary accommodation or

<sup>61</sup> Koppenhöfer, 'Ein KZ als Verhaltensmodell?', 10.

<sup>62</sup> Kühling, *Osnabrück*, 150 (emphasis added).

<sup>63</sup> Occurrence report by the mayor, as local director of air-raid protection, on the air raid of 6 Oct. 1942, StA Osnabrück, Dep. 3 b XV.

<sup>64</sup> War Chronicle, No. 4/5, iv/v. 113, StA Osnabrück, Dep. 3 b XV.

shelters, as well as for roofing and carpentry work. In a report on SS Construction Brigade III, summarizing what had been achieved through the deployment of concentration-camp inmates in the third quarter of 1943, Kammler wrote: 'Following the air raid on Cologne in the night of 3 to 4 August, all camp inmates were assigned to rescue, salvage, and fire-fighting operations. Thirty-seven women and children were dug out alive from the rubble; 5,884 dwellings were cleared up in the reporting period and made more or less habitable; food, *objets d'art*, valuables, money, etc. were recovered; 4,500 corpses were dug out and placed in coffins by Construction Brigade III in operations lasting several days'.<sup>65</sup> According to another report by Kammler, by December 1943 inmates from SS Construction Brigade II had been deployed in clearance and salvage operations at more than 100 sites in Bremen, and in February 1944 the 346 inmates in Construction Brigade II were deployed on twenty-eight bomb sites in that city.<sup>66</sup> The construction brigades recovered valuable building materials and foodstuffs in the course of the salvage operations. From July to September 1943 the approximately 1,500 inmates in Construction Brigade III salvaged and stored in Cologne and Duisburg 6,837 m<sup>3</sup> of firewood, 4,570 m<sup>3</sup> of usable timber, 2,666,000 building bricks, 1,523,000 roofing tiles, and 2,871 t of scrap iron and light metals. In the same period they also moved 3,330 t of rye and oats, 140 t of wheat, and 1,190,000 kg of flour.<sup>67</sup>

The head of Section C reported these figures to his superior with some pride, but what did they mean for the camp inmates? Almost all of them were already undernourished and in poor health when they were sent from the main camps to work in the towns. For them, hard labour under the command of the SS was a tremendous burden. What rest time they had was reduced by transport to and from the camp and by long roll-calls. Lacking tools and machinery, they often had to tear down bombed out buildings and load trucks with rubble with their bare hands. Many were buried alive when the remnants of buildings collapsed around them.

The inmates' poor health was aggravated by the deficient hygienic conditions in the camps. A monthly report on the Cologne camp in July 1943 referred to some of the illnesses caused by work conditions. Inmates employed on night-time rubble clearance following air raids often suffered from conjunctivitis, owing to exposure to smoke for hours on end. Many were driven to work in open trucks, and middle-ear inflammation was frequent. Inmates forced to walk through smouldering rubble and ashes in worn-out shoes suffered abrasions and burns. Boils and eczema were widespread, since inmates were covered in dirt day after day and had no opportunity to wash with soap and water on return to the camp.<sup>68</sup> To people in such a state of exhaustion, otherwise relatively harmless diseases could soon prove fatal. Moreover, the

<sup>65</sup> SS-WVHA, 9 Nov. 1943, BA NS 19/14, 28.

<sup>66</sup> SS-WVHA, 14 Feb. 1944, BA NS 19/14, 34.

<sup>67</sup> SS-WVHA, 9 Nov. 1943, BA NS 19/14, 29.

<sup>68</sup> HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 9, 24.

struggle to stay fit for work was a daily fight for survival. Every inmate knew that anyone unable to work would be sent back to the main camp.

Work in the bombed-out cities also took a psychological toll. Tadeusz Grzelak, 20 years old at the time, described an occasion on which he and some other inmates were sent to a bombed-out children's home to clear the rubble: 'I found a girl there—she must have been 11 or 12—buried up to her neck. I dug her out halfway and tried to pull her out by the arms, but she was so badly wounded that the rest of her body . . . That was my worst day in Cologne. It was horrible, really horrible.'<sup>69</sup> Rapid extraction of the dead and wounded from the rubble was held to be of special political importance because—as Carl Haidn, the mayor of Düsseldorf, put it in October 1942—'it had a powerful effect on public morale'.<sup>70</sup> After air raids, the SS construction brigades were specifically deployed for that purpose, and many people were rescued as a result. A former camp inmate, Fritz Gerasch, wrote: 'Despite their wretched existence and although most of them were foreigners, the camp inmates worked hardest of all, and often risked their own lives, to rescue people buried in the rubble. In one operation in which I took part, nine people were saved: seven women, a child, and a soldier. They had aged considerably in the few hours during which they had been buried alive. But we never got a word of thanks. After all, the rescuers were only camp inmates.'<sup>71</sup>

Corpse collection squads were also formed from the construction brigades, since the bodies buried in the rubble had to be recovered quickly to prevent an epidemic. The work was hardest to bear in the summer months, witness a report by the medical corps in Cologne: 'The following numbers of the fallen have been evacuated by the medical corps so far: 81 bodies on 30 June 1943, 973 on 1 July 1943. Many of the corpses were bloated and stank unbearably. Many of our men couldn't take it and threw up. We had to distribute alcohol to keep them on the job.'<sup>72</sup> It was not, of course, politically desirable for concentration-camp inmates to be used to recover the bodies of German 'fallen'; but given the shortage of manpower there was hardly any alternative. As Goebbels recorded in his diary after a visit to the Rhineland in July 1943: 'The question of how to bury the dead is also fraught with difficulties. There is a shortage of coffins, and a shortage of people to dig the graves. Mostly it has to be done by prisoners or foreign workers, which of course makes an extremely bad impression on the local population. But that is unavoidable. In many cities the death toll is so high that we are forced to resort to such measures.'<sup>73</sup>

Following Operation GOMORRHA, the mass air raids on Hamburg from 25 July to 3 August 1943 that claimed around 34,000 lives,<sup>74</sup> SS Construction

<sup>69</sup> NS-Dok, Z 10.509, interview with Tadeusz Grzelak.

<sup>70</sup> BA R 36/10, 82–3.

<sup>71</sup> Gerasch, *In der Hölle*.

<sup>72</sup> Report from the medical corps, 1 July 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/87.

<sup>73</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, ix, 67–8 (9 July 1943).

<sup>74</sup> See Büttner, 'Gomorrha'; *Die Hamburger Katastrophe*; Middlebrook, *Hamburg*. For contemporary accounts see also Nossack, *The End*; 'Geheimbericht des hamburgischen Polizeipräsidenten

Brigade II was transferred to the city and spent weeks recovering bodies. The camp inmates dug out corpses swollen by the summer heat, dragged them out of canals, sorted bits of bodies, and laid them out ready for transport. Pavel Vasilevich Pavlenko, who weighed only 42 kilograms at the time, dug up corpses for weeks on end: 'Many people died. One time, they dug out the bodies of two children, two old people, and a woman. Suddenly, a naval officer arrived carrying a suitcase. He seemed in good shape. Only, they were his children, his wife, and his mother and father. He pulled out his pistol and shot himself. We loaded him on the truck with the rest of them. Sure, we were enemies, but it's hard to bear the sight of a dead body in any circumstances. You get used to it in the end, but in the early days it made our hair stand on end.'<sup>75</sup> Antoni Papernik recalls that inmates working in the Hamburg corpse collection squads stank so badly that 'you could smell us half a mile away'.<sup>76</sup>

Response to the deployment of camp inmates in all the cities referred to was overwhelmingly positive. Since the work of the construction brigades had initially been limited to two months, the municipal authorities soon applied to Berlin for an extension. On 19 November 1942 the mayor of Duisburg wrote to the WVHA that:

It is of the greatest interest to the City of Duisburg that this deployment should continue as long as the present urgent need for bomb-damage clearance manpower lasts and cannot be met by other means. In this connection the City of Duisburg attaches special importance to the deployment of inmates from the SS construction brigade, whose performance has been highly satisfactory. At the same time, the City of Duisburg is constantly mindful of its obligation to supply the camp inmates with the best possible provisions and care. It will, however, be possible to cover the costs involved only if the detachment of inmates is not withdrawn on 15 December 1942, as originally planned, but is made available until at least the most urgent bomb damage clearance work has been completed.<sup>77</sup>

The positive reaction to the deployment of concentration-camp inmates was mainly due to the fact that the construction brigades accounted for a high proportion of the available manpower. Of more than 2,000 men engaged in clearance work in Bremen in January 1943,<sup>78</sup> 750, i.e. over a third, were concentration-camp inmates from Construction Brigade II. The director of emergency measures in Cologne had 1,335 people available in April 1944, of whom about half, i.e. 700 men, were inmates from Construction Brigade III.<sup>79</sup>

über die schweren Luftangriffe auf Hamburg im Juli/August 1943', StA Hamburg, 731-6/I; report by Mayor Krogmann to a meeting of the Association of German Local Authorities in Munich on 12 Nov. 1943, BA R 36/10, 637-55.

<sup>75</sup> Pawel Wasiljewitsch Pawlenko, 19 May 1992, AGN, Interview No. 1576.

<sup>76</sup> Antoni Papernik, 8-9 Sept. 1991, AGN, Interview No. 1573.

<sup>77</sup> BA NS 19/14, 16.

<sup>78</sup> Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen*, iv. 531.

<sup>79</sup> See file note by Brandes, 24 Apr. 1944, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/46.

In addition to their quantitative importance, there was also the fact that the building administrations could make use of camp inmates at any time, whereas other labour resources—whether from the SHD, POW battalions, or detachments of foreign manual workers—were frequently withdrawn after a few days. Both Heinrich Himmler and Oswald Pohl were regularly impressed by the praise from city mayors, and Hans Kammler did not tire of stressing successful cooperation with municipal authorities, who ‘were constantly requesting prolongation of the deployment period or an increase in the number of inmates. These requests could be met only in isolated cases, since there were not enough camp inmates available.’<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, the changing war situation gave rise to new political priorities. SS Construction Brigade I was transferred to the Atlantic Wall as early as spring 1943, and the other construction brigades were withdrawn from the cities in May 1944. The inmates assigned to the existing construction brigades—of which there were by then five in all—were then put to work moving arms production facilities underground in the area of the future Mittelbau-Dora complex or building V-weapon sites. At the same time, starting in late 1943, hundreds of new satellite concentration camps with thousands of inmates were set up all over the territory of the Reich, but they were assigned almost exclusively to arms production work.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4. BOMB-DISPOSAL SQUADS

Among the measures that Himmler ordered to be taken immediately after his reconnaissance trip in September 1942 was the extensive use of concentration-camp inmates in the disposal of unexploded bombs. On 9 September 1942 he wrote to the chief of the regular police, Kurt Daluge: ‘I note that in many cases the use of prisoners to detect and dispose of unexploded bombs is purely theoretical; mostly the work is being done by our worthy sappers—who, as experts, must obviously remain in charge of it—while the riff-raff sit comfortably in their prisons and concentration camps. A proposal is to be submitted to me immediately for the transfer to every air-raid protection zone of a squad of prisoners—as in Cologne, where there is a prison nearby—or, where that is not the case, of a squad of concentration-camp inmates requiring only a small guard detail. Suitable people must be selected and informed that courageous action will win them their freedom. Organization must be comprehensive, so that each zone has its bomb-search and -disposal squad, and large pyrotechnics sites that collect the bombs up.’<sup>82</sup> Orders to use concentration-camp inmates for defusing unexploded bombs had been issued repeatedly since 1940, but they had apparently been insufficiently acted upon. The first

<sup>80</sup> BA NS 19/14, 24.

<sup>81</sup> From October 1944 the assignment of camp inmates was decided by the Armaments Ministry, not the WVHA, see Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit*, 403.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted from BA NS 19/14, 119.



bomb-disposal squads of camp inmates were sent from Sachsenhausen to Berlin in the summer of 1940.<sup>83</sup> In September 1940 Göring informed Air Fleets 1 to 5 and the Luftgau commands that military convicts, concentration-camp inmates, and judicial prisoners were to be used for the disposal of unexploded shells and bombs with delayed-action fuses, and the OKW, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, and the Reich minister of justice ordered their use for that purpose.<sup>84</sup> On 12 October 1940, however, Hitler forbade the use of military convicts in all cases involving danger to the disposal squads, and ordered that recourse be had mainly to concentration-camp inmates and judicial prisoners.<sup>85</sup> On 21 October 1940 the Berlin Luftgau HQ accordingly ordered that only inmates from Sachsenhausen concentration camp be used for bomb disposal and transport.<sup>86</sup>

Although air-raid protection was a task for the Reich authorities, and as such came under the authority of Hermann Göring as Reich minister for air transport and commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, the main tasks had been taken over by the regular police commanders and the local police authorities. Bomb disposal, on the other hand, remained the responsibility of the Luftwaffe's special bomb-disposal squads.<sup>87</sup> Such squads, consisting of specially trained 'explosive ordnance disposal' (EOD) technicians, were set up in each Luftgau command after the SHD had suffered heavy losses. As enemy air raids increased, additional local bomb-disposal squads were added.<sup>88</sup> Luftgau Command VI, for example, had three such squads, in Münster, Cologne, and Kalkum.<sup>89</sup> During the period of bomb damage clearance, the forces of the Luftgau command were assigned to the chief of police, in his capacity as local director of air-raid protection.<sup>90</sup> Since 1938, professionally qualified explosives experts had belonged, as members of the 'fire protection police', to the regular police force. In 1944 the members of the fire protection police were transferred to the Allgemeine SS.<sup>91</sup>

In his criticism of Daluge, Himmler dwelt on the high number of soldiers and EOD technicians still being killed in bomb-disposal operations in 1942. During his trip to Cologne in September 1942 he was informed of an accident that had happened a few days earlier in which four men of the SHD had lost their lives.<sup>92</sup> On 3 November 1942 Himmler again emphatically drew the attention of senior SS and police leaders, city police chiefs, the WHVA, the Reich

<sup>83</sup> Naujoks, *Mein Leben*, 241–6. <sup>84</sup> RLM and ObdL, 4 Sept. 1940, IfZ, MA 414, 6385, based on StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 34. On the deployment of convicted criminals see correspondence of 1940–1 in HStA Stuttgart, E 151/03 Bü 947.

<sup>85</sup> *Führer-Erlasse*, 145–6.

<sup>86</sup> Decree in Demps, 'Konzentrationslager', 13.

<sup>87</sup> Schmidle, 'Der Luftkriegseinsatz', 34. Schmidle devotes considerable space to demarcation disputes between the Wehrmacht/Luftwaffe and the SHD.

<sup>88</sup> Merz, *Feuerwerker*, 7–8.

<sup>89</sup> Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 31.

<sup>90</sup> Merz, *Feuerwerker*, 35.

<sup>91</sup> The Reich Law on the Fire Service of 24 Nov. 1938 incorporated professional firefighters, as members of the 'fire protection police', in the regular police force, alongside the constabulary and gendarmerie, see Rumpf, *Der hochrote Hahn*, 21, 119.

<sup>92</sup> For examples see Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 28. On Cologne see Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 45.



minister for air transport, and the Reich minister of justice to the Führer decree of October 1940. In category 1 air-raid protection localities, prisoners were to be requisitioned directly from prisons or concentration camps. Himmler ordered detachments of camp inmates, each commanded by an SS officer, to be dispatched to ARP localities in which there were no concentration camps. The Orpo commanders were to be responsible for their accommodation, food supply, and guarding, and it was proposed that they be quartered in police prisons.<sup>93</sup> A few days later, Section D of the WVHA instructed concentration-camp commandants to make detachments of inmates ready for that purpose. In the case of concentration camps that had raised construction brigades, the inmates were to be taken from the construction brigade satellite camps.<sup>94</sup> The swift disposal of unexploded bombs was becoming increasingly urgent because the sealing-off of large surrounding areas on safety grounds was causing considerable production losses.<sup>95</sup>

From spring 1943 the bomb-disposal squads in the Rhineland and Westphalia were boosted with considerable numbers of concentration-camp inmates. The background to this measure was an RAF offensive in which more bombs with delayed-action fuses were dropped that were particularly dangerous to recover and defuse.<sup>96</sup> In addition, the USAF was now conducting daily air raids. In April 1943 the Reich minister of justice and the Reichsführer SS gave orders that criminals and concentration-camp inmates in bomb-disposal squads working on bombs with delayed-action fuses must continue their operations in buildings after dark and during air-raid warnings.<sup>97</sup> On 28 May 1943 the Cologne construction brigade, on orders from the senior SS and police leader for the Reich West area, sent fifty camp inmates to Düsseldorf. They were quartered in a former school building at 74–80 Kirchfeldstraße in the Friedrichstadt district.<sup>98</sup> From there they were driven daily to the Luftwaffe bomb-disposal squad stationed in the Kalkum district in the north of the city. Since 1942 the bomb-disposal squad in Kalkum, guarded and commanded by EOD staff, had consisted mainly of political prisoners from the Remscheid-Lüttringhausen prison—the prison authorities having given them the choice between deportation to a concentration camp or assignment to the bomb-disposal squad.<sup>99</sup> In June 1943 they were joined in their quarters on Kirchfeldstraße by 143 inmates from the Duisburg camp, who were also employed in bomb disposal from then until at least August 1943.<sup>100</sup> In addition, groups

<sup>93</sup> See StA Nürnberg, NG-1002.

<sup>94</sup> Circular from WVHA, Amtsgruppe D, 9 Nov. 1942, IfZ, MA 414, 6380, based on StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 34.

<sup>95</sup> For examples see Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 27.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 26–7.

<sup>97</sup> RMJ, 21 Apr. 1943, to the higher Reich judicial authorities *re* expediting urgent early disposal of unexploded bombs, see HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 28/205, 141–3.

<sup>98</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1176, KL Buchenwald, 28 May 1943.

<sup>99</sup> See Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 31.

<sup>100</sup> Manpower reports, HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 227. This probably included the 100 inmates from Buchenwald concentration camp who were brought to Duisburg on 21 May 1943. An indication to that effect is found in the transport schedule, where ten inmates

of fifty to eighty camp inmates worked for several weeks in bomb-disposal squads in Dortmund, Duisburg, Bochum, and Aachen.<sup>101</sup>

In mid-1943, 285 inmates from the satellite camp in Cologne—a third of the total—were working in bomb-disposal squads.<sup>102</sup> The number remained at the same high level in July and fell again in the following months to an average of 120.<sup>103</sup> To these must be added an unknown number of camp inmates who were not permanently assigned to bomb-disposal squads but were dispatched from the construction brigade to work on bomb disposal as the case required. The assignment of camp inmates to bomb-disposal squads was effected in each instance by order of the senior SS and police leader for the Reich West area in Düsseldorf.<sup>104</sup> Some of the Luftwaffe's bomb-disposal squads consisted overwhelmingly of criminals and concentration-camp inmates. In March 1943 in Essen, for example, up to five EOD technicians, twelve bomb-disposal auxiliaries, and up to 130 prisoners worked together daily in an operation lasting almost a month.<sup>105</sup> Camp inmates from Construction Brigade III were deployed in almost all the towns in military district VI. In summer 1943 the squads worked in Elberfeld-Barmen, Essen, Bochum, Dortmund, Aachen, Jülich, Mönchengladbach, Krefeld, Wesel, Gelsenkirchen, Bottrop, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Hagen, Witten, and Schwelm.<sup>106</sup> As a rule, the inmates returned to their camps in the evenings, but they were sometimes quartered in villages overnight. In such cases they had to wear civilian clothes, so that it would not be obvious they were prisoners.<sup>107</sup>

Himmler understood the deployment of camp inmates in bomb-disposal squads, in which their lives were at risk, as a form of rehabilitation.<sup>108</sup> Initially, assignment to a bomb-disposal squad was made conditional upon a voluntary application by the camp inmates. In 1940 Sachsenhausen inmates were promised early release after repeated deployment in bomb-disposal squads,

are marked as 'volunteers'. See transport schedule of 21 May 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1177.

<sup>101</sup> Numbers of camp inmates in the squads: Dortmund: 50 inmates in May 1943, 80 in June, 75 up to July 1943, in August 1943 still 34; Duisburg: 50 inmates in May 1943, 40 in July 1943; Bochum: 40 inmates in June 1943, 26 in August 1943, 29 in December 1943; Aachen: 40 inmates on 19 July 1943, 18 on 27 July 1943. Figures taken from HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 227.

<sup>102</sup> Manpower report, 19 June 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1183.

<sup>103</sup> See billing documents for bomb-disposal squads, ISD, Sachdokumenten-Ordner Buchenwald, No. 51–3.

<sup>104</sup> Breakdown of 28 May 1943 and 31 May 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1176, and manpower reports of 31 May 1943 and 19 June 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1183; file note by head of manpower deployment, n.d. (c. June 1943), HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 213, 145.

<sup>105</sup> Occurrence report by Essen chief of police on the air raids of 5–6 and 12–13 Mar. 1943, Stadtarchiv Essen, Rep. 102 I 1126 d, taken from Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 34.

<sup>106</sup> Deployment locations in the period 1 Mar. to 30 Sept. 1943, BA NS 19/14, 29. On deployment in Krefeld see also Brenne and Vogt, *Krefeld*, 356–9.

<sup>107</sup> Statement by Olexa K., 9 Feb. 1972, ZSL IV 406 AR-Z 69/72, 186–7, and interrogation of Walter Friedrich von L., 14 May 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR 85/67, 135.

<sup>108</sup> Circular from RFSS, 3 Nov. 1942, IfZ, MA 414, 6381, based on StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 34.

and this actually happened.<sup>109</sup> In September 1940, however, the Berlin chief of the security police and SD intervened, asking Richard Glücks, inspector of concentration camps and subsequently head of Section D of the WVHA, to ensure that inmates were in no circumstances offered the prospect of release. The rumour that you could win your freedom by serving in the bomb-disposal squads persisted among camp inmates and continued to be encouraged by Himmler, but release remained conditional upon 'conduct and work performance' in the camp and a relatively minor 'criminal or political record', as determined by the RSHA (Reich security main office).<sup>110</sup> In the case of an inmate in the Kalkum bomb-disposal squad, for example, it was decided that 'in view of his political record, it is to be expected that, if released after serving his sentence, he would resume activity detrimental to the Reich'.<sup>111</sup> The Reich minister of justice adopted the same approach in the case of convicted criminals. Release on the grounds of service in bomb-disposal squads was subject to strict examination of individual cases, and conceivable only after the end of the war.<sup>112</sup>

After deployment in ten bomb-disposal operations, inmates who could not be considered for release were awarded 'detention privileges', such as assignment to a light-labour squad, permission to grow their hair, or priority access to the inmates' canteen.<sup>113</sup> Despite the scant chances of actually being released, more and more inmates believed the rumours and volunteered for bomb-disposal work.<sup>114</sup> Some were even encouraged to volunteer by promises of better food.<sup>115</sup> There were other motives too, such as the chance to scavenge undisturbed for food in bombed-out buildings, whereby the camp inmates took advantage of the fears of the EOD technicians and police: 'If we go at it with pick-axes, the guards are afraid of coming too close and getting blown up. If it's a time-fuse bomb, we have to get a move on so as not to end up in little bits. But if it's just an ordinary bomb that failed to go off . . . and there's plenty of food left in the cellar, we have ourselves a feast.'<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, word soon got round that work in the bomb-disposal squads often proved fatal. The supply of volunteers dried up, and inmates were simply assigned to the squads. On a transport list for fifty inmates assigned to the Kalkum bomb-disposal squad, for example, only six had volunteered.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Naujoks, *Mein Leben*, 242.

<sup>110</sup> Chief of Security Police and SD Berlin, 7 Sept. 1940, to Inspector of Concentration Camps Glücks, IfZ, MA 414, 6384, based on StadtA Düsseldorf, Kussmann No. 34; RFSS, 8 Jan. 1941, to RKPA; RKPA IV C 2, 31 Jan. 1941, to Amt V, repr. in *Vorbeugende Verbrechensbekämpfung*, 214, 219.

<sup>111</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 58/42.019, based on StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 35.

<sup>112</sup> *Verwaltungsverfügungen der Luftwaffe*, Bd 9, No. 106, circular from RLM and ObdL, 16 Sept. 1941, StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 34.

<sup>113</sup> Naujoks, *Mein Leben*, 246.

<sup>114</sup> Statement by Theodor S., 25 Jan. 1973, ZSL IV 406 AR-Z 207/73, 571.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Jan Jakubowski, NS-Dok, Z 10.517.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Tomasz Kuryłow, NS-Dok, Z 10.520.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Edward Kurzawa, NS-Dok, Z 10.528; transport schedule, 28 May 1943, HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1176.

Inmates risked their lives daily in these 'suicide squads'. Their main task was to dig out unexploded bombs, which were then defused on the spot by EOD technicians or transported elsewhere to be blown up. Sometimes the SS men drove the inmates so hard that they were unable to observe all the safety rules and caused a fatal explosion.<sup>118</sup> As a rule the EOD technicians, together with the SS and police guards, kept at a safe distance while the bombs were being dug out,<sup>119</sup> leaving the concentration-camp inmates to carry out the dangerous task of freeing them, sometimes with their bare hands—an operation that could take days, since bombs often sank several metres into the ground. There was not only the danger that a jolt would set off an exploded bomb. Worse still, bombs with time fuses could go off at any moment.<sup>120</sup> To minimize the risk of a fatal accident, the inmates took turns at the work: 'If only two were digging,' Zygmunt Murawski recalls, 'only two could die.'<sup>121</sup> According to Luftwaffe instructions, the defusing operations had to be carried out by the technicians;<sup>122</sup> but, here too, the rules did not always apply in practice, and the defusing was often done by camp inmates,<sup>123</sup> especially if they had been working in a bomb-disposal squad for a long time and had acquired the necessary knowledge from the experts.<sup>124</sup> For most of the technicians, the life of a concentration-camp inmate was clearly of little or no account. Time and again they deliberately assigned camp inmates to the most dangerous work, witness the account of the Kalkum squad by former prison inmate Kurt Selbiger: 'When they say so many people died, they mean those from the concentration camps. They were carted in straight away and sent to the hot spots. Most of the delayed-action fuses went off in the first few hours—it happened all the time. Time and time again, Russians—Russians in concentration-camp clothing—were assigned to the bomb-disposal squad for a while. They weren't permanently attached to our squad: they must have been quartered somewhere in the Ruhr district. They were only brought in when needed, say when there'd been a big raid on Essen, Düsseldorf, or Wuppertal . . . and assigned to bomb craters in groups of six to ten, to dig them out.'<sup>125</sup> The ruthless use of concentration-camp inmates caused many deaths. On 12 August 1943, for example, a bomb

<sup>118</sup> Statement by Jozef C., 6 Jan. 1970, ZSL IV 429 AR 1938/66, 91–2.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Michał Laskowski, NS-Dok, Z 10.529; interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.537.

<sup>120</sup> On bomb-disposal technique see Merz, *Feuerwerker*, 186–207; also interview with Edward Kurzawa, NS-Dok, Z 10.528. According to the recollections of Heinrich Weinand, a political prisoner assigned to the Kalkum bomb-disposal squad, a group of 15 concentration-camp inmates were 'blown up' in a bomb-disposal operation in March 1943. Five were killed and the others injured. After that, an order was issued that there should always be only two or three men working directly on a bomb, see Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 33.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.537.

<sup>122</sup> See 'Merkblatt über die Behandlung von Blindgängern englischer Fliegerbomben des Generalflzeugmeisters', August 1940, repr. in Rauschert, *Sprengkommandos*, 49.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.537; interview with Michał Laskowski, NS-Dok, Z 10.529; interview with Wladimir Lebedew, NS-Dok, Z 10.530.

<sup>124</sup> Rauschert, *Sprengkommandos*, 287–8.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Kurt Selbiger, 23 Feb. 1988, StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 40.

landed in Bochum that was particularly hard to defuse since it was fitted with both a delayed-action fuse and a fuse that would detonate the bomb if moved. The EOD technician in charge had the bomb harnessed to a car, which was then towed by a dozen concentration-camp inmates. All of them were 'blown sky high'.<sup>126</sup> It gradually became routine practice for the technicians to use convicts or camp inmates for the most dangerous tasks. A leaflet issued to EOD personnel in July 1944 specified that only prisoners were to be used for excavating and transporting bombs with undamaged delayed-action fuses but no tilt fuses.<sup>127</sup> In December 1944 Martin Bormann, head of the NSDAP party chancellery, confirmed the order that bombs with delayed-action fuses should be dug out primarily by convicts and concentration-camp inmates.<sup>128</sup>

Camp inmates often dug up bombs for months on end in fear of their lives. Antoni Kornacki, assigned to the Cologne bomb-disposal squad for four months, wrote: 'The work was hell, and dangerous. The squad lost many men, and we faced death every day.'<sup>129</sup> Those inmates who lived to tell the tale survived only by luck. Zygmunt Murawski lived through more than ten fatal explosions. On several occasions, bombs exploded just before the inmates arrived or shortly after they had finished digging them out and left the bomb site.<sup>130</sup> Jan Jakubowski also narrowly escaped with his life. He had gone to fetch water when a bomb he was working on exploded, killing thirteen inmates: 'I brought them all back [the dead men] in a couple of buckets . . . they were torn to pieces.'<sup>131</sup> Some inmates tried to get themselves rejected from the 'suicide squads'. Pawel Potozkij, for example, saw his comrades killed, managed to get put down as sick, and was subsequently transferred to another squad.<sup>132</sup>

Many inmates deployed in the bomb-disposal squads were maimed, suffering severe burns or losing their arms, legs, hearing, or sight.<sup>133</sup> The reports of successful operations which the head of the WVHA sent regularly to Heinrich Himmler show how often the inmates came close to death. According to one of Kammler's reports, from July to September 1943 bomb-disposal squads from Construction Brigade III dug out and detonated 5,985 bombs of various types and calibres. By December 1943 another 1,000 had been added to the total. From January to March 1944 a further 884 bombs were disposed

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Karl Selbiger, 23 Feb. 1988, StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 40. The names of the camp inmates killed in the explosion are all documented, see Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 224.

<sup>127</sup> Leaflet, 25 July 1944, Staatsarchiv Münster, Oberpräsidium No. 5072, based on Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 31.

<sup>128</sup> See BA NS 6/352, 60.

<sup>129</sup> Letter from Antoni Kornacki, NS-Dok, Z 10.523.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.537.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Jan Jakubowski, NS-Dok, Z 10.517.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Pawel Potozkij, NS-Dok, Z 10.547.

<sup>133</sup> For examples see HStA Weimar, KZ Buchenwald No. 9, 267–8, 338–9; accident report from SS Construction Brigade III, Duisburg detachment, 16 Feb. 1944, SGB, BwA Fotothek Neg. No. A/201; interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.573.

of in Duisburg and Cologne.<sup>134</sup> These figures must, however, be viewed with considerable scepticism. For the period 1 March to 30 September 1943, only ten cases of inmates fatally wounded in bomb-disposal operations are mentioned. In fact, at least twenty-six died in that period.<sup>135</sup> But even cautious examination of the figures suggests that in the summer of 1943 inmates from Construction Brigade III were involved in the disposal of almost all unexploded bombs in Luftgau command VI.<sup>136</sup> In the case of Cologne, at least, there is documentary evidence that the work of concentration-camp prisoners on bomb-disposal squads was of exceptional importance. After Construction Brigade III was withdrawn in May 1944 and a satellite camp set up in Cologne for a period of two months was closed down in October 1944, the city's chief of police wrote to the district president informing him that the disposal of unexploded bombs was now almost at a standstill.<sup>137</sup>

In the particular climate of the bomb-disposal squads, close personal relations could develop between camp inmates and the technicians and guards in charge of them, who were also exposed to great danger—especially as inmates often worked for months in small groups in the same squad and enjoyed relative freedom of movement. In the case of the Luftwaffe squads, Himmler had assigned SS men convicted of criminal offences to guard the camp inmates, giving them the opportunity to 'regain their honour' by serving on the dangerous bomb-disposal squads.<sup>138</sup> In early 1943 one convicted SS man was assigned to a bomb-disposal squad on which he worked, day by day, together with four concentration-camp inmates.<sup>139</sup> In the course of the work he became friendly with two of the inmates; he supplied them with additional rations and played music with them during free time within the camp compound. After the war both inmates provided him with character references.<sup>140</sup> The EOD technicians who usually commanded the bomb-disposal squads make hardly any mention of how they remember the concentration-camp inmates. In a book on the technicians in the Second World War based on his own life, Walther Merz, who was assigned to the Kalkum squad as an explosives expert, stresses their courage and sacrifice. The convicts and concentration-camp inmates who, as we have seen, did much of the work of digging out the bombs, are mentioned only in a passing remark: 'they felt quite at ease with us.'<sup>141</sup> We find a similar pattern in the accounts of policemen reporting on the recovery and disposal of unexploded bombs.<sup>142</sup> The work by Manfred Rauschert, also autobiographical, is concerned mainly with the technique

<sup>134</sup> BA NS 19/14, 29, 35–6, 42.

<sup>135</sup> BA NS 19/14, 29; see also table in Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 224–5.

<sup>136</sup> See, for example, the figures in Krüger, 'Wenn Sie nicht ins KZ wollen', 26–7, and Krüger, 'Großangriffe'.

<sup>137</sup> Cologne chief of police, 31 Oct. 1944, HStA Düsseldorf, BR 1131/119.

<sup>138</sup> Himmler, 9 Sept. 1942, to Daluge, BA NS 19/14, 119.

<sup>139</sup> Interrogation of Walter Friedrich von L., 14 May 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR 85/67, 134–5.

<sup>140</sup> Interrogation of Walter Friedrich von L., 14 May 1969, ZSL IV 406 AR 85/67, 133–7.

<sup>141</sup> Merz, *Feuerwerker*, 14–15.

<sup>142</sup> See Bahl, 'Der Einsatz'.



and practice of unexploded-bomb disposal. Rauschert, who volunteered for assignment to a bomb-disposal squad as a young man shortly before the end of the war, devotes only a few pages to the convicts and camp inmates.<sup>143</sup> Hans Rumpf, who was inspector-general of the fire service from the end of 1942, says not a single word about the prisoners forced to work in bomb-disposal squads.<sup>144</sup> Although photographs taken of the Kalkum squad testify to near-intimacy within that 'community of fate',<sup>145</sup> the concentration-camp inmates disappeared almost completely from at least the published memoirs of the bomb-disposal technicians and explosives experts. In the course of an interview, a former EOD technician from the Kalkum group made a clear distinction between convicted criminals and camp inmates, referring to the latter only in passing as 'other prisoners' who may sometimes have been involved.<sup>146</sup> These intentional or unintentional gaps of memory, whether due to feelings of guilt, fear of punishment, or plain lack of interest, at least make one thing clear: the camp inmates, with whom these people associated on a daily basis, were posthumously erased from their consciousness—smoothed over in their recollections of a war which they themselves barely managed to survive.

<sup>143</sup> Rauschert, *Sprengkommandos*, 281–3; StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann No. 36.

<sup>144</sup> Rumpf, *Der hochrote Hahn*.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, the two photographs from the Norbert Krüger collection, repr. in Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 112–13.

<sup>146</sup> Conversation with Heinrich Z., 9 Mar. 1988, StadtA Düsseldorf, coll. Kussmann, Box 33–36.



## IV. The Camps and German Society

### I. CONCENTRATION-CAMP INMATES IN EVERYDAY WAR SOCIETY

ON 13 June 1942 Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary: 'Himmler has issued a circular criticizing ill-considered threats of commitment to a concentration camp. He is quite right. Many concentration-camp threats are a public nuisance. Some Kreis leaders and city mayors think they can threaten to send people to a concentration camp whenever something in public life is not to their liking.'<sup>1</sup> Goebbels's note indicates an awareness of concentration camps at a time when only a small section of the population had ever set eyes on an inmate. But experience since 1933 had established concentration camps in the public mind as the severest form of punishment by the state, and it is clear that in everyday life they were used as a threat in order to secure compliance. Their sinister reputation was built up through deliberate propaganda by the state police. Shortly after the beginning of the war, during the second largest wave of arrests of political opponents since 1933, the Rhineland state police authorities defined their policy on public notification as follows: 'It was unanimously agreed that notification of commitment to a concentration camp by *putting up a notice* in the workplace is ineffective, since such notices are not read by the whole workforce and, even when they are read, are defaced with inflammatory comments or removed, and can be made available to foreign propaganda agencies. It was therefore proposed that such cases be announced by suitable persons at a general meeting in the workplace.'<sup>2</sup>

So, when satellite concentration camps were set up in cities in autumn 1942, how did the local population react to the inmates in cities? Although the SS-WHVA (Economic and Administration Department) was—as we have seen from Gerhard Weigel's guidelines to the Bremen municipal authorities—concerned to isolate the camp inmates in the cities both physically and socially, they were soon visible at many different locations in the city precincts, since squads of inmates left the camps every day to work on various sites. In Cologne, camp inmates were sometimes working at over eighty different locations. In Bremen, they worked on around 100 bomb sites in the space of a year. A photograph taken in Cologne in October 1943 shows a group of concentration-camp inmates leaning against the wall of a house on Martinsfeld, in front of which scrap metal is being loaded on a trailer. The photographer, Josef Fischer, stuck a piece of greaseproof paper on the print with the inscription: 'View from our kitchen window. A labour squad knocking off work. They are inmates from

<sup>1</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iv. 515 (13 June 1942).

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of regional HQ conference in Bonn, 2 Nov. 1939, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 34/24, 11 (emphasis in original).

a concentration camp set up in the exhibition grounds.<sup>3</sup> Colloquial expressions which remained in use after the war show that the sight of the inmates in their typical striped clothing had become part of everyday wartime experience. In Düsseldorf the inmates of the camp on Stoffeler Kapellenweg were known as the 'blue and white guard'. In Bremen they were called 'zebras'.<sup>4</sup> Despite the large presence of camp inmates in the cities, there are few surviving eye witness accounts, and their content is very scanty. Only a few have been published, usually in connection with research on satellite camps.<sup>5</sup> Even for the 'big' concentration camps, the systematic collection of statements from the local population began relatively late.<sup>6</sup> As a rule, these accounts are overlain by post-war knowledge about the Holocaust; they are therefore implicitly concerned with the question of guilt for the annihilation of Europe's Jewish population, and provide only a limited perception of wartime attitudes. Until very recently many eyewitnesses were reluctant to speak of their recollections. In the 1980s, for example, a school class doing research on the satellite camp in Duisburg-Meiderich met with strong resistance. When they began to write down the recollections that had been conveyed to them in conversation, some local informants were no longer willing to speak to them.<sup>7</sup> There is a significant body of eyewitness accounts collected in the course of official investigations—those recorded in the immediate post-war period being the more authentic—but the problem with such sources is that the witnesses were greatly influenced by the judicial context of the investigations. Despite the need to treat this material with extreme caution, we have attempted in what follows to identify some basic features of the local population's perception of camp inmates and its reaction to them.

There can be no doubt that the population of the cities in which the satellite camps described here were located not only had the possibility of seeing the inmates but were also able to look into the camps and observe their living conditions. In Cologne a person standing near the station on the left bank of the Rhine could see the satellite concentration camp's parade ground with the naked eye. In Düsseldorf, too, people living near the camp could see into the compound on Stoffeler Kapellenweg. In Duisburg the windows on Emmericherstrasse looked directly into the camp. It is striking that what are missing in the vast majority of cases are precisely accounts by those people who had a very good view of the camps. A former resident of Duisburg explained this as follows: 'You could see into the camp from some of the apartments, but

<sup>3</sup> Repr. in Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 88. Original in NS Documentation Centre, Cologne

<sup>4</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 177; Marbolek and Ott, *Bremen*, 358.

<sup>5</sup> Time and again, local studies are proving a rich source of information. In the late 1980s Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, used them to collect a whole series of statements by local residents.

<sup>6</sup> In 1999, for example, Annette Leo and Jens Schley conducted fifty life-history interviews with men and women born in the years 1910 to 1933 who had lived near Ravensbrück concentration camp. See Leo, 'Das ist so'n zweischneidiges Schwert', 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 8.

most people didn't know what kind of camp it was. At first, most Meiderich residents thought it was a labour camp. We had no idea there was a concentration camp here. In any case, in the prevailing atmosphere of National Socialism, hardly anyone thought about what went on in the camp.'<sup>8</sup>

One reason for such limited ability to perceive the reality was the widespread conviction that concentration-camp inmates were 'criminals', 'asocials', and enemies of the regime, whose imprisonment and harsh treatment was therefore justified.<sup>9</sup> The image of the 'criminal' was particularly enduring. As late as June 1949, for example, the Düsseldorf residence registration office stated in writing that all the inmates of the camp on Kirchfeldstrasse had been imprisoned criminals.<sup>10</sup> And in the Duisburg city chronicles we read: 'Passers-by could certainly see closely guarded people in zebra-like striped clothing employed on this work [rubble clearance], but could not approach them. They were said to be professional criminals and asocials.'<sup>11</sup> This basic attitude of the majority population manifested itself in strong aversion to the inmates. It sometimes gave rise to open hostility, even physical attacks, especially in the first weeks and months after a camp was set up. Asked what he remembered in particular about his captivity in Cologne from September 1942 to January 1943, Jan Suzinowicz, who had then been 17 years old, said: 'First of all, the air raids, of course. Then, on our way to work, people sometimes spat at us, and young people, the Hitler Youth, sometimes threw stones.'<sup>12</sup> Other inmates also remember being spat at in the cities.<sup>13</sup> The sight of the prisoners, as they dragged their uniformed, bruised, and emaciated bodies through the streets, confirmed the negative image of concentration-camp inmates created by state propaganda about 'criminals'. They scarcely resembled human beings. A resident of Düsseldorf described the inmates struggling through the streets in all weathers as 'people reduced to the state of animals'.<sup>14</sup>

A frequent reaction to the gradual spread of the concentration-camp population in the cities was fear. The sight of the inmates unavoidably brought home the misery and lack of rights produced by commitment to a concentration camp. Sometimes the reaction was one of shock. Emil Pascha from Düsseldorf, who was 36 at the time, recalled: 'Coming home from work by tram soon after the first air raids . . . I would often see a column of thirty to forty inmates on their way back to the camp. I could see them from the tram . . . As

<sup>8</sup> Eyewitness account by Herr N. (1985), based on *ibid.* 9.

<sup>9</sup> Examples for Düsseldorf in Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*. The inmates of Ravensbrück were said to be 'real criminals', 'easy women', and 'politicals', see Leo, 'Das ist so'n zweischneidiges Schwert', 13–14. On creation in the 1930s of the basic consensus that all politically and socially disruptive elements should be subjected to state terror, see in particular Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 197–9.

<sup>10</sup> ZSL, IV 429 AR-Z 16/74, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Averdunk and Ring, *Geschichte der Stadt Duisburg*, 343.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Jan Suzinowicz, NS-Dok, Z 10.582. In other places too, inmates were led through rows of spitting and cursing local residents. See Koppenhöfer, 'Ein KZ als Verhaltensmodell?', 14.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Tadeusz Grzelak, NS-Dok, Z 10.509.

<sup>14</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 181.

the crowded tramcar slowly passed them, you couldn't help seeing the faces of the miserable wretches, yellowed and emaciated, with their shaven skulls. It was such a shocking sight that passengers turned away in silence and women wiped away their tears.<sup>15</sup>

Even if one's first reaction was to want to help, it was better to keep away from the camp perimeter fence and the inmates, according to Heinz Zimmerman, a Düsseldorf resident who was 14 at the time: 'The inmates didn't walk, they wobbled along. And they were heavily guarded by SS. None of us, or our mothers, dared to give the prisoners any food. We were too afraid . . . I never saw the camp itself, since we were much too scared to go near it.'<sup>16</sup> Most children and youngsters showed a lively interest in the inmates, but the adults kept the subject taboo at home. Rudolf Schmidt, born in 1928, commented: 'When I mentioned the camp to my parents, my father would say "It's a kind of concentration camp." But they didn't talk about it much; they were afraid.'<sup>17</sup> The fear of finding oneself on the other side of the barbed wire for expressing sympathy with the inmates is expressed more or less openly in almost all accounts. Internalizing the threat of being sent to a concentration camp, people kept silent.

The SS, however, did not feel obliged to refrain from tormenting inmates simply because the camps were visible to the public. On Sundays the people of Duisburg could see inmates forced to collect stones and put them in buckets. When the buckets were full, they were emptied and had to be filled again.<sup>18</sup> In Düsseldorf local people could see inmates beaten and forced to move piles of earth from one place to the other and back again.<sup>19</sup> SS men threw stones at inmates who were eating and pushed others off a barracks roof. Screams could be heard and, at night, shots.<sup>20</sup> Corpses could also be seen. Hubert Wichmann, whose parents ran a farm near the Düsseldorf camp, often went there to collect kitchen refuse. On one such occasion he saw a dead inmate with a bullet wound in the chest.<sup>21</sup> Another man from Düsseldorf, Joseph Kempen, saw inmates' corpses lying in the camp on several occasions.<sup>22</sup> Corpses were also carried through the city, as a Düsseldorf resident reports: 'I frequently saw inmates returning from the city around four o'clock in the afternoon. Almost every day, some were dragging with them inmates who had died on the way.'<sup>23</sup>

Most of the fatal ill-treatment, as well as the shootings and hangings, took place within the camp perimeters.<sup>24</sup> But we also have documentary evidence of cases in which inmates were executed publicly as a deterrent: 'During rubble clearance in Cologne some fellow-workers were shot on the spot by the SS

<sup>15</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 190.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Eyewitness account by Frau W., repr. in *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 106.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 73, 106; eyewitness account by Frau W., repr. in *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 188–9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>24</sup> For examples see Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 133–4, 232–5.

for breaking into apartments and stealing valuables, especially gold.<sup>25</sup> Inmates suspected of or actually attempting to escape were often executed directly at the workplace.<sup>26</sup> During one attempted escape the SS and police guards attracted considerable attention as they searched through neighbouring buildings for the fugitives. As a result, many local people, like Düsseldorf resident Emil Pascha, knew how the SS behaved when inmates tried to escape. 'The four- or five-man guard details were a farce, since the tormented prisoners were too weak to run away. And even if they had dared to, they would have been shot.'<sup>27</sup> Although used to the sight of dead bodies, people who personally witnessed a killing, like Egon Bauerett, a 13-year-old boy in Cologne in the winter of 1943/4, were stunned—in his case, lastingly bewildered. He saw a blatantly sick inmate shouted at and forced to continue working by his overseer, despite obvious exhaustion and illness. 'The prisoner kept saying "I can't go on, I'm ill." He [the overseer] took his rifle from his shoulder and shot him. Shot him on the spot.'<sup>28</sup>

The sight of violence did not provoke resistance. Rather, it tended to increase the pressure to conform and led to further withdrawal into private life. According to a witness living in Duisburg at the time: 'Among friends, people condemned the harsh treatment they had seen. But criticism was never uttered in public. The Party dictatorship had cowed people into complete silence.'<sup>29</sup> However, the open exercise of terror by the SS also had a habituation effect which, backed by National Socialist slogans from the period of the struggle for power—such as 'toughness' and 'ruthlessness' towards political opponents—legitimized violence. Furthermore, SS violence in the camps was not conducted in secret: it was promoted positively as a necessary principle. When, for example, mothers complained to the SS that their children could witness the inhuman treatment of prisoners in the school yard in Osnabrück, the answer they got was: 'If the children aren't tough enough yet, they have to be hardened.'<sup>30</sup>

What help did camp inmates receive from the local population? While it was forbidden to make contact with inmates, many opportunities to approach them arose in the course of time. Local residents walked past inmates' workplaces and camps every day or found them clearing rubble in their own streets or repairing the roofs of their apartment blocks. An appreciable number, such as people who delivered food to the camps or men recruited by the municipal authorities as auxiliary police to guard camp inmates, encountered them in the course of their work. Workmen of all kinds worked alongside camp inmates every day. Many accounts refer to inmates being secretly given

<sup>25</sup> Statement by Stanislaw J., HStA Düsseldorf, Gerichte Rep. 118/1184, 173.

<sup>26</sup> See table in Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 231; for an example from Düsseldorf see statement by Werner B., 1 Oct. 1969, ZSL, IV 429 AR-Z 16/74, 122–6.

<sup>27</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 181.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Egon Bauerett, NS-Dok, coll. Projektgruppe Messelager.

<sup>29</sup> Averdunk and Ring, *Geschichte der Stadt Duisburg*, 343.

<sup>30</sup> Interrogation of Agnes W., 3 Nov. 1950, ZSL, IV 406 AR 221/74, 65–6.

bread. There are also very grateful references to such support in the memoirs of camp inmates, for whom supplementing the meagre camp rations was a matter of survival.<sup>31</sup> In a few cases, help from local people enabled prisoners to break through the isolation of camp confinement and make contact with their families, at least by letter. A civilian member of Tadeusz Grzelak's work detachment, for example, sent postcards from fictitious people to Grzelak's parents.<sup>32</sup> Both sides were afraid of being punished for contact between them. Whether and how severely they were punished depended on the whim of the guards. Some guards 'looked the other way', others had people locked up in police headquarters for the night for attempting to help camp inmates.<sup>33</sup> The prisoners themselves risked being transferred back to the main camp and reported to the political department. This happened to two inmates who on 30 March 1943, according to the leader of SS Construction Brigade III, attempted 'to enter into contact with the civilian population at various construction sites'.<sup>34</sup>

Active intervention against public violence by the SS seldom occurred, but when it did—as the following examples show—it could be entirely successful and without negative consequences for those intervening. In one such case an SS man in Hamburg was ill-treating a camp inmate in the street: 'Only a gathering of civilians on their way to work, and some booing from onlookers, induced roll-call leader Ebsen to release his victim.'<sup>35</sup> In Essen there was even a case in which such intervention prevented a camp inmate from being shot, without negative consequences for the person who intervened. Werner Betzold, a prisoner transferred in 1944 from Construction Brigade I in Duisburg to a DEST detachment in Essen, had complained to the camp commandant repeatedly that there was no doctor for the inmates. One morning, beside himself with rage, the commandant drew his pistol and pointed it at Betzold. Calm was restored thanks to a policeman who blew his whistle to call other police officers to the scene.<sup>36</sup> So it was definitely possible to intervene, especially when several people were in a position to protest jointly. Prisoners experienced such outside support as exceptional. Fritz Bringmann, for example, tells of an incident that occurred in Osnabrück in December 1942, two months after the satellite camp had been set up, when a woman passer-by protested to an SS man who was beating an inmate unconscious. Her intervention was the subject of animated discussion in the evening by the inmates at the Overberg School camp because, according to Bringmann's account, 'nothing like that had ever happened before'.<sup>37</sup> It was, he

<sup>31</sup> For examples see Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 75–6.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Tadeusz Grzelak, NS-Dok, Z 10.509. <sup>33</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> Report from SS Construction Brigade III, 30 Mar. 1943, SGB, No. 59–78.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Ernst Bösch, 28 Feb. 1946, BA BY 5/V 279/70. The person in question is presumably Karl August Friedrich Ebsen, sentenced to death as an accessory to murder for acts committed at the Neuengamme satellite camp in Schandelah, communication from Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Centre, 23 Jan. 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Schmidt, *Lichter*, ii. 196–8.

<sup>37</sup> Bringmann, *KZ Neuengamme*, 42–3; Fritz Bringmann, 29 July 1981, AGN, Interview No. 153.



says, the first small indication that 'in 1942 there were still people in Germany who had not forgotten the difference between humanity and inhumanity, and had the courage to voice their feelings'.<sup>38</sup>

Such protest seems to have been a one-off occurrence in Osnabrück, since ill-treatment of prisoners in full public view continued unabated. According to a police reservist assigned to guarding concentration-camp inmates: 'They were really brutally ill-treated on the construction sites. I personally witnessed many cases of ill-treatment both by construction squad leaders and by camp trustees. Inmates were beaten over the head with battens till they collapsed with blood streaming down them, and were often unable to work for a long time afterwards.'<sup>39</sup> All in all, people in the large cities behaved not so differently from those in Weimar or Dachau. There were small gestures of compassion for inmates, but effective support only in a few exceptional cases.<sup>40</sup> Political support came primarily from the forced labourers who made up an ever larger part of the urban population from 1942 onwards, and consisted mainly in helping inmates escape and hiding them from their pursuers.<sup>41</sup>

Post-war local history accounts certainly mention the deployment of concentration-camp inmates, even if usually very cursorily, and from their tenor one can draw interesting conclusions about how prisoners were seen at the time. A lengthy popular 'factual report' by a journalist on the former *Kölnische Zeitung*, published in 1949, refers to forced labourers, prisoners of war, and concentration-camp inmates only in passing. In the form of a chronicle of events, it mentions that 2,000 prisoners of war were employed on rubble clearance after the massive air raid of 30/1 May 1942, and that concentration-camp inmates transported coffins to the city mortuaries after the raid of 28/9 June 1943.<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere, there is a reference to the selfless actions of prisoners of war and foreign workers during the air raids, but without any mention of their particular living conditions.<sup>43</sup> They are reduced to minor figures on the fringes of the article's main theme, namely the suffering of the local population during the destruction of Cologne. It was not until 1983, after documents about Cologne SS Construction Brigade III had been published in an exhibition catalogue,<sup>44</sup> that a history of the city of Cologne in the Nazi period, presented as a comprehensive study, failed to pass over the fact that there had been concentration-camp inmates in the city during the war. Nevertheless, the existence of the Buchenwald satellite camp was again portrayed as a by-product of the Allied bombing campaign.<sup>45</sup> This points to a major reason why the SS concentration-camp system continued to function as it intruded

<sup>38</sup> Bringmann, *KZ Neuengamme*, 43.

<sup>39</sup> Interrogation of Heinrich K., 20 July 1950, ZSL, IV 406 AR 221/74, 50.

<sup>40</sup> Schley, *Nachbar*, 110–11; Steinbacher, *Dachau*, 181–2.

<sup>41</sup> Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', ch. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Fischer, *Der Weg durch das Feuer*, 20, 28.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>44</sup> *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Köln*, 375–6, 397–8, 400.

<sup>45</sup> Klein, *Köln im Dritten Reich*, 259.



more and more into society at large: the camps were surrounded not by a civil but by a war society.

## 2. INTERACTION BETWEEN WAR SOCIETY AND THE WORLD OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The reactions of the majority society to the satellite concentration camps, as described in the previous section, raise a multitude of questions. Is it possible to identify any basic features in the diffuse picture of assent and repugnance, hostility and compassion, fear and cooperation? Let us first consider the type of work assigned to camp inmates. They were employed on tasks traditionally performed by prisoners. Rubble clearance was physically demanding, dirty, and unskilled work. Inmates employed in retrieving corpses and putting them in coffins were doubly despised as 'enemies of the people' and gravediggers. In the bomb-disposal squads they were used as mine-sniffing dogs for the EOD team. They had to work where their foremen or guards told them to, and for as long as they were told. In short, the work of the camp inmates reflected the National Socialist concept of a hierarchical organization of labour in which the free German worker stood at the summit as foreman, and slave workers were at the bottom. This 'master-race' concept had been put into practice at the front. On 8 September 1942 Adolf Hitler decreed that, as far as possible, German building workers employed in the occupied territories should not be used for low-level work such as stone-breaking, carrying bags of cement, or rubble removal. To give them such tasks would be to act irresponsibly towards the homeland, since they were 'wholly incompatible' with the 'standing of Germans' in the occupied territories. German workers, Hitler continued, had to be used not only as skilled labour, but primarily as foremen in charge of foreign workers. For western Europe, Hitler prescribed a ratio of 1:5, for the occupied eastern territories 1:10.<sup>46</sup> In addition, concentration-camp inmates were subjected to extreme terror at work, witness an account by a member of a Cologne labour detachment: 'This output could be achieved only if the inmates were worked to exhaustion. Moreover, they were undernourished when they arrived, and the rations they were given here were insufficient. Those in command thought the way to squeeze the last drop of work out of them was to keep them in a constant state of fear and terror. The SS camp leadership was especially concerned to be able to send favourable reports to Buchenwald about the state and progress of the work.'<sup>47</sup> Kicks and blows were used routinely in pursuit of high output targets: 'We also unloaded ships in the port. It was hard work and needed superhuman strength. We were beaten and hungry. They hit us for no particular reason: the SS took every opportunity to beat us.'<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Decree repr. in *Führer-Erlasse*, 280-1.

<sup>47</sup> Account by Toni Fleischhauer [Nov. 1962], ZSL, IV 429 AR 1304/67, 28-9.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Jozef Frejmann, NS-Dok, Z 10.510; see also statement by Jozef C., 6 Jan. 1970, ZSL, IV 429 AR 1938/66, 91-2.

Blows from the guards were prompted not only by personal contempt for the inmates; it was part of their job to monitor work output and keep their prisoners hard at it. The efficiency of inmate labour was under constant observation especially in the cities, where prisoners from the camps worked in full view of the public. Following inspection of a DEST satellite camp in July 1944, the state police in Essen wrote to the inspector of the security police and SD in Düsseldorf: 'The slow work tempo made a bad impression. One squad was recovering bricks from the rubble. The inmates had to carry the bricks to the road, a distance of about 15 metres. They moved quite slowly, each carrying no more than two or three bricks. The administrator in charge informed me that, according to the orders, inmates had to carry five bricks at a time. They simply did not do so, and no threats of arrest, reduced rations, etc. could get them to work faster.'<sup>49</sup> We may assume that the reporting officer could think of all sorts of reasons why people worked so slowly—from laziness to obstinacy, and even sabotage. Only one reason defied his imagination: that there were people who were unwilling to work for *this* Reich—quite irrespective of whether their physical condition would have allowed them to do so.

The performance of inmate labour was also monitored by the staff of the municipal administrations. In the first few weeks after the construction brigades were set up, it became clear to municipal officials that the output of the inmates mainly depended on the pressure applied by the SS. In a report on SS Construction Brigade II in Osnabrück written in January 1943 we read: 'Good progress was made on rubble clearance at the outset, thanks to the transfer of 250 concentration-camp inmates to Osnabrück. These men, *who are under strict supervision*, work much better and harder than prisoners of war and foreign volunteer labour.'<sup>50</sup> 'Strict supervision' was the code word for beatings by the SS: it is no accident that, after the war, this part of the sentence was quietly deleted from the edited city chronicles.<sup>51</sup> The methods used by the SS to improve inmates' work output were also expressly welcomed by Bremen's city senator for town planning, Hans-Joachim Fischer. On 20 January 1943 he wrote to the WVHA: 'May I take the opportunity to express my appreciation of the construction brigade's exceptional performance in bomb damage repair and rubble clearance. I would particularly emphasize its efficiency, which I attribute first and foremost to *strict supervision* by the officers and men of the SS.'<sup>52</sup> Apparently, the SS set an example in Bremen for the treatment of other categories of forced labourers. At a meeting of all Bremen department heads on 9 March 1943, the participants dealt in detail with the issue of improving the output of foreign workers and prisoners of war, and called for drastic measures against 'the work-shy and lazy'.<sup>53</sup> While the example of the camp

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Schmidt, *Lichter*, ii. 189.

<sup>50</sup> StA Osnabrück, Reg. Osnabrück, Rep. 430, Dez. 201, Acc. 14/47, No. 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>51</sup> See StA Osnabrück, Dep. 3 b XV, Kriegschronik, 113, entry for Jan. 1943.

<sup>52</sup> StA Bremen, 4, 29/1-1307, repr. in *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, 221 (emphasis added).

<sup>53</sup> Maršolek and Ott, *Bremen*, 417.

inmate squads was certainly not the only reason for their more radical attitude, it certainly played a part.

The consensus on the use of the wretched concentration-camp inmates for rubble clearance, despite the fact that they had long been physically incapable of such work, seems to have been particularly widespread in the 'total war' society. After Stalingrad, which brought people for the first time face to face with the prospect of defeat, the military outlook was increasingly gloomy, and there was growing fear that Germany might lose the war after all. Terror was stepped up. The pressure also came from the arms inspectorates and authorities responsible for rubble clearance, such as GB-Bau Cologne-Aachen, which instructed directors of emergency measures in April 1944 to supervise the work output of prisoners of war more strictly, impose punishments, and make greater use of weapons in dealing with recalcitrant prisoners.<sup>54</sup> It referred to a briefing to officers by a commander in charge of prisoners of war, which ended with the words: 'I repeat: German blood is being spilt to save Europe. Total deployment of all foreigners, including prisoners of war, is the least we can do, and it is absolutely essential.'<sup>55</sup>

Among the general public, too, complaints were heard that foreigners were not working hard enough and German supervisors were too easy on them. 'Why can't incompetent supervisors be punished by confinement on bread and water?' a road-building contractor complained in March 1944. 'Why can't people who don't work be deprived of food?' Invoking his own experience at the front, he continued: 'Just listen to our comrades on the front line. The officers and men say we must wage war like the Russians do. Maybe we are already asking enough of our own people, but we are still much too soft on prisoners of war and the other labour squads on our streets. I say, better throw one man overboard than let us all drown.'<sup>56</sup>

Under concentration-camp conditions, an increase in work terror meant an increase in the physical destruction of inmates. As the municipal administrations paid only for satellite-camp prisoners actually employed, and not for those too sick to work, there were regular selections of sick and weak inmates, who were sent back to the main camps. All prisoners feared this form of punishment since, for them, return to the main camp meant the crematorium. Inmates scarcely able to stand tried to show up on the parade ground for morning roll-call so they could set off for work, supported by their comrades. Even when seriously ill, they avoided being treated in the sick bay or spending more than a few days there. 'At that time, they didn't keep you here if you hadn't worked. They didn't keep you so you could sleep. No work meant goodbye. All you were supposed to do was work. If you were sick for two or three days, you might get away with it. But if they saw you were really ill, it was goodbye.'<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> GB-Bau Köln-Aachen, 12 Apr. 1944, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/19.

<sup>55</sup> HStA Düsseldorf, RW 54/19, undated, unsigned attachment.

<sup>56</sup> Walter de C. to Economic Group for the Construction Industry, 4 Mar. 1944, BA R 13 VIII/160.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Piotr Wassiljewitsch Martjuchin, NS-Dok, Z 10.609.

From the Cologne construction brigade alone, over 400 prisoners deemed no longer fit for work were sent to Buchenwald, in single or mass transports, from September 1942 to February 1944.<sup>58</sup> Because of the regular work-fitness selections, inmate society was constantly fluctuating. Within the concentration-camp system, hierarchies of survival emerged as soon as inmates began to be deployed outside the main camps: there were 'good camps', where you stayed as long as you could work, and 'bad camps', to which people unfit for work were sent to die. This gave rise to a false distinction—which most people in the world of the satellite camps made at the time—between less 'bad' camps and the main camps. In fact, the satellite camps were also part of the concentration-camp system of physical annihilation.

The pressure on concentration-camp inmates increased even more from 1943 onwards when, in pursuit of 'total war', the last reserves were squeezed out of the German population and, under the slogan 'self and community help', German workers were forced to take part in bomb damage repair.<sup>59</sup> More air raids regularly resulted in the further harshening of wartime society, and rubble clearance became a punishment that could be imposed on fellow Germans. At the latest after the air raids in July 1944, Stuttgart had a 'special detachment for rubble clearance' that included persons compulsorily assigned to it for failing to show solidarity with the total war society. The Party's Kreis leadership warned that the 'nation at war' would show no mercy to those seeking to avoid their 'national duty'. One man was punished with several weeks' rubble clearance work, for example, for refusing to take a bombed-out family into his home, as was a woman who had taken in a foreigner's child in an attempt to avoid compulsory labour.<sup>60</sup>

'Work' and 'terror' coincided increasingly outside the concentration camps, and the interaction between camp and war society became clearly noticeable. Concentration camps were the centres of a social disciplining process aimed at the whole of society. Many years' acceptance of legitimized terror in the concentration camps favoured the successive extension of the laws of the concentration-camp state to society at large, and the spread of terror from the fringes to the centre of society.<sup>61</sup> This process was not simply the outcome of an aggressive claim to power by the SS or NSDAP. Rather, it was set in motion by the consensus—be it total or partial—within the majority society, and the accompanying forms of cooperation and collaboration. The 'work education camps' set up from 1941 onwards as cooperative projects between firms, municipal administrations, and state police authorities in the context of the

<sup>58</sup> Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 125.

<sup>59</sup> Decree of the Reich marshal of the Greater German Reich, 23 Jan. 1943, concerning self and community help in the rapid elimination of bomb damage, in *Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*, 18 Feb. 1943. On the wartime situation of German workers see Werner, 'Belastungen'; Eichholtz, 'Unfreie Arbeit', 125–36; and for the last years of the war, Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*, iii, 642–6.

<sup>60</sup> See communications from NSDAP Kreis HQ, 23 and 26 Sept. 1944, repr. in *Chronik der Stadt Stuttgart*, 997. The corresponding files are in StadtA Stuttgart, coll. Luftschutz, No. 311.

<sup>61</sup> Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 248–9.

total war economy are a prime example. They were intended for all workers designated as 'unwilling elements in breach of work contracts . . . whose behaviour is tantamount to sabotage or who endanger general working morale'.<sup>62</sup>

Conditions in the 'work education camps', in which workers, some German but most of them foreign, were confined for a limited period and then released back into employment, were similar in many respects to those in the concentration camps.<sup>63</sup> The procedure for transferring inmates from one type of camp to another became smoother all the time, and local state police authorities used satellite concentration camps to increase the available detention accommodation. From April 1943, for example, the state police in Cologne used the Construction Brigade III satellite camp to accommodate 'work education camp' inmates. The background to this cooperation with the SS was the dramatic rise in the numbers arrested—especially foreign forced labourers accused of idleness, running away, or sabotage—for whom there was neither enough detention accommodation nor sufficient guard personnel. The Gestapo's prisoners were then subjected to the same conditions as concentration-camp inmates, the only difference being that the Gestapo usually released its prisoners after a few weeks.

These developments directly increased the threat to the population. Without his case ever being referred to the WVHA, and without ever have been confined to Buchenwald concentration camp, any male resident could find himself on the other side of the camp perimeter fence from one day to the next by order of the local state police. When the SS withdrew its construction brigade from Cologne in May 1944, the camp, which contained only 287 concentration-camp inmates but 576 Gestapo prisoners, was kept in operation along concentration-camp lines. All in all, several hundred prisoners of the Gestapo spent time in the satellite camp without ever having been formally committed to Buchenwald.

The indifference to the fate of concentration-camp inmates revealed by the accounts of those living near the camps is also attributable to the collapse of the normal social environment and infrastructure during the war. A Duisburg resident who lived next to the local satellite camp explained that indifference as follows: 'Most people were much too concerned with their own troubles and the repair of war damage. Some had had dreadful experiences outside their homes that had blunted their emotional responses.'<sup>64</sup> Those cities that hosted satellite camps from 1942 onwards were precisely those hit by the war at an early stage. Cities like Cologne and Hamburg showed signs of the collapse of war society long before the end of the war.<sup>65</sup> Day after day, people were confronted with destruction, violence, and death, and the organization

<sup>62</sup> Quoted from Article 9a of the Decree of 28 May 1941 in HStA Düsseldorf, RW 34/27.

<sup>63</sup> For a general description see Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo'.

<sup>64</sup> Eyewitness account by Herr N. (1985), repr. in *Initiative wider das Vergessen*, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Rusinek, 'Maskenlose Zeit', 187. The features of German war society are also vividly described in Schäfer, *Berlin im Zweiten Weltkrieg*; Szodrzynski, 'Das Ende'; Mommsen, 'Kriegserfahrungen'.

of daily survival was fraught with difficulty. In the consciousness of the urban population, 'home' and 'front' were already the same. An SD report of 22 July 1943 on the effects of the latest air raids on Cologne and Aachen described the situation of the local population as '*life at the front*, of which people in the rest of the Reich have no idea'.<sup>66</sup> Their own suffering in the bombing war, especially from 1943 to 1945, turned 'the master race into self-pitying victims'.<sup>67</sup> Even when concentration-camp inmates were perceived as victims of the regime, they were set against the other victims—the 'lonely, unburied, charred, torn corpses' under the ruins of the cities.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the massive air raids, Allied hopes of politically destabilizing Nazi Germany were disappointed. Arthur Harris, commander-in-chief of Britain's Bomber Command, commented that even after nearly all of Germany's industrial cities had been destroyed, this had still had no effect on the population.<sup>69</sup> Joseph Goebbels's strategy of material assistance to bombed-out families, pursued since 1942, did much to prevent social collapse. In January 1944 Goebbels noted with satisfaction that 'those whose homes have been destroyed become supporters of our hopes of victory by that very fact, since they cannot imagine recovering their property under any other circumstances . . . It also seems clear that bomb-damage repair will require a concerted effort of the whole community, and that can only take place under the banner of National Socialism.'<sup>70</sup> While Reichsführer SS Himmler worked through exclusion and terror, propaganda minister Goebbels sought to hold the *Volksgemeinschaft* together through integration and social assistance. The concentration camps occupied a special position in this system of rule, too: they were the central pivot of a system based on slavery and robbery in which shouldering the burdens of war was forced onto internal and external political opponents.

The population of the devastated cities benefited directly from the camp economy in many ways. Following agreement between Himmler and Speer, the manufacture of windows for bombed buildings began in Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen concentration camps as early as 1942.<sup>71</sup> Concentration-camp inmates performed work for the cities in the SS-owned Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke (DAW) until the end of the war. In 1944 the DAW factory in Neuengamme manufactured replacement windows for Hamburg houses and apartment blocks, as well as windows ordered by the Reich ministry for armament and war production. In Dachau, inmates made 'doors for bomb damage victims'. The Berlin carpenters' guild was conducting negotiations with the DAW on the manufacture of windows and coffins in Sachsenhausen

<sup>66</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv, 5515 (SD reports on home affairs, 22 July 1943) (emphasis added).

<sup>67</sup> Szodrzyński, 'Das Ende', 294.

<sup>68</sup> Barth, *Lemuria*, 90.

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (1948, 78, quoted by Janssen, *Das Ministerium Speer*, 143–4.

<sup>70</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, xi, 165–6 (25 Jan. 1944).

<sup>71</sup> Schulte, 'Rüstungsunternehmen', 571.



concentration camp as late as the end of February 1945.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the quantitatively most significant aspect of the camp economy was exploitation of all the possessions of those sent to concentration camps. Hundreds of inmates were employed in sorting luggage, clothing, health care goods, footwear, and jewellery. Consumer articles were mostly sent to the front, but also to the 'home front'. Exploitation of the property of the Jewish populations deported to the extermination camps assumed extravagant proportions from 1941. Inside the camps, it extended to parts of the human body.<sup>73</sup> Outside, it continued with the appropriation and distribution of hundreds of thousands of household furnishings and fittings of Jews who had emigrated or been deported. For years bomb damage victims in particularly hard-hit cities were supplied with 'Jewish furniture' brought from all the countries of Europe in some 20,000 railway wagons. There is no doubt that the population knew where the furniture, carpets, stoves, and other household equipment came from.<sup>74</sup>

Gaps in supply were by no means filled only by 'non-Aryan property' or plundered goods from the conquered territories. Corruption, fraud, and black marketeering were mass phenomena in a war society plagued by permanent shortages.<sup>75</sup> Here, too, the concentration camps became centres of a life-and-death struggle for the distribution of goods. 'Hunger', wrote a former inmate in SS Construction Brigade I shortly after the war, 'is a powerful weapon, and the SS made good use of it.'<sup>76</sup> In almost all the camps, the lives of the inmates were endangered by the misappropriation of food supplies, often organized jointly by SS men and corrupt camp trustees. And it was no different in the satellite camps. In Düsseldorf the misappropriation of food supplies resulted in such tiny rations that a large proportion of inmates were reduced to emaciated 'Muslims' in the space of a few weeks.<sup>77</sup> The Cologne camp commandant, Karl Wilhem Völkner, organized theft from city rubble and worksites for his own benefit, allowing the inmates selected for the purpose to keep part of the proceeds—mostly food and underwear—for themselves.<sup>78</sup> Many of those who joined in such fraud for the sake of their own survival paid

<sup>72</sup> See DAW monthly reports in BA NS 3/463.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Strzelecki, 'Der Raub'.

<sup>74</sup> See Bajohr, 'Arisierung in Hamburg', 331–8; Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 100–2; *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv, 27 Sept. 1943, 5821 (SD reports on home affairs, 27 Nov. 1943). On the requisitioning of furniture from Jewish property ('M-operations') and its distribution to bomb damage victims, see also Ralf Blank in the present volume.

<sup>75</sup> See Bajohr, *Parvenüs*, in particular 'Lagersystem und Korruption', 90–7. On combating wartime crime by deportation to concentration camps, see Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, in particular 394–6.

<sup>76</sup> Memoirs of a former SS Construction Brigade I inmate, published in Dutch in May 1946, ZSL, 410 AR 63/77, 132.

<sup>77</sup> Account by Alfons K., 8 Sept. 1947, AGS, IV/26. In camp jargon 'Muslims' were inmates who, due to total physical and mental exhaustion, were more dead than alive.

<sup>78</sup> Fings, *Messelager Köln*, 60, 102.



for it with their lives, for whenever misappropriation or theft was suspected, camp inmates were handed over as culprits or accomplices. This happened, for example, to two men in the Düsseldorf camp, who were shot out of hand at the perimeter fence in February 1944 by SS guards who were afraid they might disclose what they knew about the theft of valuables from bombed-out houses in the city.<sup>79</sup>

It can be safely assumed that the local population was involved to an appreciable extent in camp corruption.<sup>80</sup> In the accounts we have by camp inmates, the people the SS traded with are not mentioned by name: they are referred to in general terms as civilians, jewellers, factory owners, social workers, office employees, or private individuals.<sup>81</sup> What is unclear is the extent to which the local population enriched itself on misappropriation of the inmates' already meagre rations and further reduced their chances of survival.

A sociological study of the National Socialist concentration camps describes them as a 'closed universe' in the midst of society in which the SS wielded absolute power over the inmates.<sup>82</sup> According to this interpretation, the fortified boundaries and guard posts 'transmuted the camps into a visible but secluded and silenced place of terror in the midst of society'.<sup>83</sup> This standardized image of the concentration camps is, however, only partially correct. From the inmates' point of view, the boundary, especially that of the main camps, was hermetically sealed. Inside the camp the inmates were exposed to the arbitrary brutality of the SS, and escape was all but impossible. But when we examine social practice in the places where concentration camps were sited, we can see communication between the interior and the outside world. In Auschwitz, for example, social relations involving hundreds of SS men and their families were formed between the camp and its surroundings—through supply relations with local tradesmen and businessmen, or contact with inmates working outside the camp.<sup>84</sup> The findings so far concerning urban satellite camps also show that they were embedded in their environment, and that the society of the camp was by no means completely cut off from that surrounding it by the physical barrier of the camp limits. Conversely, this raises the question how terror in the camps could be so unrestrained. How was it that a single SS man could decide on the life or death of a camp inmate at any time? What significance did the surrounding society have in this respect?

The accounts of camp survivors contain important information in answer to these questions. For camp inmates, the German population—including that of Austria, or the 'Ostmark' as it was then called—was a hostile society.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup> The case is fully documented in Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 117–50.

<sup>80</sup> For examples see Koppenhöfer, 'Ein KZ als Verhaltensmodell', 16–17.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Karl A., 15 June 1964, FZH, 13–7–5–5.

<sup>82</sup> Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 14.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>84</sup> Regarding Auschwitz concentration camp see Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt' Auschwitz, 53.

<sup>85</sup> Langbein, *Against All Hope*, 266.

Zygmunt Murawski, born on 28 April 1922 in the Polish town of Rawicz, was a student at the school for non-commissioned officers when Poland was attacked. He was arrested together with his father and younger brother and deported to Buchenwald concentration camp on 15 October 1939. In the summer of 1943 he was transferred for the first time to another camp, SS Construction Brigade III in Cologne. At work he fell into conversation with a woman who asked him why he did not try to run away. In reply, he asked where he should run to. He had been imprisoned for four years, did not know his way around Germany, and, above all, had no way of telling whether anyone would help him. In Buchenwald he had all too often seen escaped inmates recaptured and severely punished as a deterrent. 'The blocks had to assemble, and the escapee, bleeding from the beating he had received, held up a sign with the words "back in Buchenwald after so many days' leave". They did it to show us it was useless to try and escape. They would be recaptured anyway . . . No one ever survived an attempted escape.'<sup>86</sup>

From the point of view of the Nazi regime, helping escaped concentration-camp inmates or prisoners of war was not a crime committed by the German population to any extent worth mentioning. On 14 October 1943, in a lecture to commanders on 'security issues', Himmler stressed that the security situation was 'calm' despite the presence in the Reich of around 7 million foreign workers and prisoners, and many escaped prisoners. He attributed this to the fact that the death penalty was applied more frequently and more ruthlessly than before, and emphasized that the population gave escaped prisoners little support. Between 90 per cent and 95 per cent of all prisoners of war were recaptured within a week. Support for escaped prisoners of war was 'almost non-existent'.<sup>87</sup>

There are documented cases showing that most of German wartime society had no pity for concentration-camp inmates, and handed escapees over to the authorities.<sup>88</sup> In early November 1942 five inmates escaped from the Düsseldorf satellite camp and went into hiding in the neighbourhood.<sup>89</sup> To survive, they stole food and clothing from cellars. When residents reported the thefts, the criminal police investigators suspected escaped concentration-camp inmates, since the thefts 'are being committed by people who are apparently extremely hungry: in many cases they open up the preserving jars in the cellar and eat all the contents on the spot.'<sup>90</sup> The police set up special

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Zygmunt Murawski, NS-Dok, Z 10.537. Hauptscharführer Martin Sommer was in charge of the detention bunker at Buchenwald concentration camp for several years: the inmates called him 'the hangman of Buchenwald', see Kogon, *Der SS-Staat*, 83.

<sup>87</sup> BA, AllProz 2/43, doc. L-70.

<sup>88</sup> For examples and further bibliographical references see Koppenhöfer, 'Ein KZ als Verhaltensmodell', 24.

<sup>89</sup> The following is based on HStA Düsseldorf, NW 174/29 I-IV.

<sup>90</sup> Note by Criminal Police Branch 12, Wersten, 19 Nov. 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, NW 174/29 I.

patrols and the residents kept watch. On 19 November Ilja Baschtschew was stopped by a resident, who shot and wounded him. On 5 April 1944, after a ruling by the Reich Supreme Court, the Düsseldorf special court sentenced Baschtschew to death as a *Volksschädling* – a ‘pest upon society’. The main grounds for the sentence were that the cellar thefts had occurred in an area ‘exposed to attack from the air’ and concerned goods which were ‘particularly difficult to replace and had been stored in the cellar to protect them against enemy air raids’.<sup>91</sup>

Unmistakably, social proximity between the satellite camp’s neighbours and the National Socialist legal authorities—between *Volksgenossen* and enforcement officers—was incomparably greater than that between ‘ordinary’ Germans and prisoners of the Nazi regime. This impression is strengthened by the post-war statements of persons who had close contact with, or even access to, the satellite camps. In the case of Osnabrück, those statements show that the townspeople were in no doubt about the wretched living conditions of the camp inmates. Nevertheless, the cookery teacher and the school caretaker, i.e. two people who moved around the camp almost every day, both said they could provide no information about the inmates’ living conditions.<sup>92</sup> The landlord of the Haus Kolvenbach inn, which bordered directly onto the Düsseldorf camp and had a table for regulars from the SS guard post, also maintained he had never seen or heard of any mistreatment:<sup>93</sup> Social contact with the SS guards during the war led to the subsequent trivializing of camp conditions.

These and other examples show that, in its majority, German war society identified with the camp guards. Little girls living near the women’s concentration camp in Ravensbrück played at ‘camp guards’.<sup>94</sup> In extreme cases, local National Socialist activists took the camp guards as an example and formed their own ‘corporal punishment squads’.<sup>95</sup> Thus the boundary of a concentration camp was social as well as physical. It was a specifically National Socialist demarcation line that divided the population into those who, in the wartime struggle for survival, were part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and those who had ‘no right to existence in the National Socialist state’.<sup>96</sup> By virtue of its political identification with the purpose of the camps and social proximity to the enforcers, German war society formed ‘an additional barrier around the camp’.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Note by Criminal Police Branch 12, Wersten, 19 Nov. 1942, HStA Düsseldorf, NW 174/29 I, 89–90. On the *Volksschädlingsverordnung* see Grabitz, ‘Normative Grundlagen’.

<sup>92</sup> Interrogation of Agnes W. and Fritz L., 3 Nov. 1950, ZSL, IV 406 AR 221/74, 65–9.

<sup>93</sup> Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 72.

<sup>94</sup> Leo, ‘Das ist so’n zweischneidiges Schwert’, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Koppenhöfer, ‘Ein KZ als Verhaltensmodell’, 25–31.

<sup>96</sup> In June 1944 Section W (Economic Enterprises) of the WVHA wrote, concerning the ‘organization and tasks of Section W’, ‘The Reichsführer SS, as head of the German police, had the task of solving problems that the Reich as such is unable to solve, namely that of arresting all asocial individuals who had no right to exist in the National Socialist state and putting them to work for the benefit of the national community as a whole. This was done in the concentration camps.’ Doc. repr. in Naasner, *SS-Wirtschaft*, 277.

<sup>97</sup> Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 58.

## 3. SURROUNDING SOCIETIES COMPARED

A look at camps located outside the *Altreich* will enable us better to appreciate the importance of the surrounding society for the situation of concentration-camp inmates. The hypothesis that the local population's behaviour towards them was significantly different in the occupied territories is supported by testimony from survivors detained in various countries. Aimé Bonifas, who was transferred from a camp in Compiègne, France, to Buchenwald concentration camp in September 1943, described the inmates' march from the Weimar railway station to the camp as follows: 'The transport set off shortly after nightfall. We were marched half-naked through the streets of Weimar. Shameless, sniggering women gathered with their children to watch us go past. Just imagine, French terrorists—what a spectacle for the master race! A Teutonic maiden on a bicycle called out: "Why don't you shoot the lot of them?" What a world of difference between their cynical contempt and the behaviour of our own French women.'<sup>98</sup> Let us now look at two satellite camps: SS Construction Brigade I, which was stationed on Alderney in the Channel Islands in early 1943 and for several weeks in Belgium during its withdrawal in the summer of 1944, and SS Construction Brigade V, which was deployed in north-western France from early 1944.<sup>99</sup>

The occupation of the Channel Islands off the Normandy coast was completed on 4 July 1940. Adolf Hitler placed considerable value on their capture, as the first British territory conquered by the German Reich.<sup>100</sup> From the military viewpoint the Channel Islands were important in providing cover for German naval and air operations along the Channel coast. On 20 October 1941 Hitler ordered that they be transformed into an impregnable fortress, as part of what was to become the Atlantic Wall.<sup>101</sup> The small island of Alderney was in a special position during the German occupation. While the inhabitants of Jersey, Guernsey, and Sark remained on the islands, the 1,500-strong population of Alderney, except for a handful, was evacuated to Britain on 22 June 1940 before the German troops arrived. Until the end of the war there were virtually no civilians on Alderney.

In early summer 1943 there were approximately 3,800 Wehrmacht troops and about 4,000 German and foreign workers from the Organisation Todt on the island's 8 square kilometres.<sup>102</sup> The troops were quartered in the houses left empty by the residents, while the Organisation Todt, which had arrived in

<sup>98</sup> Bonifas, *Häftling* 20.801, 54.

<sup>99</sup> For a detailed account of both construction brigades see Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', ch. 5.

<sup>100</sup> On the history of the Channel Islands 1940–5 see Cruickshank, *The German Occupation of the Channel Islands*.

<sup>101</sup> Führer order of 20 Oct. 1941 *re* reinforcement and defence of the British Channel Islands, BA-MA RW 4/v. 265.

<sup>102</sup> Figures from Cruickshank, *The German Occupation of the Channel Islands*, 194; Pantcheff, *Alderney*, 6–9.

January 1942, had built four barrack camps for German and foreign workers in different parts of Alderney, named after islands in the North Sea.

From 1942 onwards German workers were repeatedly transferred to other locations along the Atlantic Wall, so that foreign workers made up the bulk of the workforce employed on Alderney's extensive fortifications. Some 700 German Todt overseers on Alderney commanded an army of as many as 3,000 foreign forced labourers, of whom the east Europeans were the worse treated. A soldier stationed in the Channel Islands from February to September 1942 described the east Europeans' arrival in August 1942 in his diary: 'The mixture of peoples on the island has now been enriched by Russian civilian workers. Smelling pungently, their padded clothing in tatters, often barefoot, and always wearing peaked caps so different from the berets worn in the west, their sad, stiff figures are everywhere to be seen. It seems to me their clumsy gait is due partly to malnutrition and partly to their wooden-soled shoes. Their arrival has raised the status of the most abject Frenchmen to that of semi-rulers.'<sup>103</sup>

The situation of the east European forced labourers on the island, inhabited only by Wehrmacht troops and the paramilitary Organisation Todt, was similar to that of concentration-camp inmates. In the last quarter of 1942 alone, 158 forced labourers died, almost all of them from eastern Europe. After six months on Alderney the east Europeans in particular were hardly capable of working, and in January 1943 around 500 of them were transferred to the mainland.

The resultant gaps were now to be filled by concentration-camp inmates, a category of workers considered unlikely to pass on secret information to the enemy. On 22 February 1943 a transport of 1,000 camp inmates assembled in SS Construction Brigade I left Düsseldorf for Alderney, where they arrived on 5 March.<sup>104</sup> Their destination was Camp 'Sylt', an Organisation Todt camp near the airport, which had been enclosed in accordance with SS security requirements.<sup>105</sup> The deployment of forced labourers and concentration-camp inmates on the island was coordinated by the Organisation's Todt work supervisor. The working and living conditions of the concentration-camp prisoners were similar to those of the forced labourers. Apart from one Sunday a month, when they had half a day off, they had to work 12 hours every day. On Alderney, too, they were assigned to the hardest physical work: tunnel-digging, road-building, and stone-breaking.<sup>106</sup> If Hans Kammler's reports are to be believed, the island's whole requirement for stone, gravel, sand, and grit had been met by November 1943 thanks to the work of the camp inmates in the stone quarries.

<sup>103</sup> Nebel, *Bei den nördlichen Hesperiden*, 302–3.

<sup>104</sup> Diary notes of former inmate Curt H., ZSL, IV 404 AR-Z 57/67, 251–2, and copy of diary of Erich Frost (n.p., n.d.), WGG.

<sup>105</sup> Pantcheff, 'Britain's Only SS-Concentration Camp', 33; id., *Alderney*, 29–30.

<sup>106</sup> See reports by Hans Kammler, BA NS 19/14, 25–6, 33–4, 40–1.

How did the troops, who still made up half the island's population, react to the presence of the concentration-camp inmates? In general, they had nothing to do with them. The everyday life of the soldiers on Alderney, which they commonly referred to as the 'arsehole of the world',<sup>107</sup> was characterized by boredom and what they considered to be poor rations. They saw the labour squads marching through the streets, watched the camp inmates at work, and talked in guarded tones about the particularly harsh conditions in the stone quarries. They also talked about the hangings and shootings said to take place in the camp. An 18-year-old volunteer, stationed on Alderney since the late autumn of 1942 as part of a twelve-man Luftwaffe unit, went regularly to Camp 'Sylt' with his comrades for a haircut. The young men dared neither to engage the inmates in conversation nor to take a closer look round the camp: 'We only went to the camp to get our hair cut. That was the only time we got permission to enter it. I can't remember what the barracks looked like. There was an unwritten rule that we were not to be curious. And we weren't. We only paid attention to the hair-cutting barracks . . . There were three camp inmates working there as barbers. When we were there, they weren't guarded. So we could in fact have talked to them. But no one, neither the inmates nor us, dared ask any questions, such as "What are you doing here?" or "How did you get here?" Our only thought was: I'm having my hair cut by a political prisoner or a Jehovah's Witness . . . It all comes back to the same thing: we were very young, and we didn't dare ask anything.'<sup>108</sup>

So what can we conclude from a comparison of the situation of camp inmates on Alderney and in Düsseldorf? A relatively reliable indicator of camp conditions is the death rate.<sup>109</sup> When Construction Brigade I was withdrawn from Alderney in the night of 24 to 25 June 1944, the SS counted only 636 inmates out of the original 1,000. What had happened to the other 364 in the space of barely fifteen months? A total of fifty-four had escaped during transport to Alderney, about 210 had been transferred from Alderney back to Neuengamme, and 100 had died on the island. The death rate for concentration-camp inmates on Alderney was thus no different from that for forced labourers. At the previous camp location in Düsseldorf, 111 inmates out of 600 died in the period from October 1942 to February 1943.<sup>110</sup> In both locations the SS commanders and guards, and their brutal behaviour towards the inmates, were identical. So whereas every sixth inmate died in the Düsseldorf camp, on Alderney 'only' every tenth inmate died. That is to say, in the midst of a relatively closed society consisting only of German troops and paramilitary units, considerably fewer inmates died than in a camp surrounded by the civilian population of a

<sup>107</sup> Packe and Dreyfus, *The Alderney Story*, 48.

<sup>108</sup> Author's interview with Alfred M., 11 Feb. 1998.

<sup>109</sup> Figures from Fings, 'Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ', ch. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Figures from Kussmann, *Ein KZ-Außenlager*, 201-11, as per cremation register of the cemetery in Stoffeln.



large German city. Furthermore, the level of provisioning in Düsseldorf was still much higher than on the Channel Island, which had to be supplied by sea. This finding supports the thesis that the conditions for survival in the satellite camps were not improved by their location in the midst of German war society. Within the Reich, the surrounding urban society did not have a 'civilizing' influence on concentration camps.

The satellite concentration camps in Normandy provide another example of differing behaviour by the surrounding society. SS Construction Brigade V (also known as 'SS Construction Brigade West') existed from March to October 1944. With around 2,500 inmates, it was the largest of all SS construction brigades. It had been set up by order of Heinrich Himmler, dated 29 December 1943, to build V-weapon bases in north-western occupied France.<sup>111</sup> The guard units consisted of 95 Buchenwald SS, sixty-one army troops, and 213 from the Luftwaffe. Additional SS troops were assigned to administrative and technical duties.<sup>112</sup>

The situation in Normandy was characterized by the fact that the SS were operating a construction brigade for the first time in an occupied country. Unlike in the *Altreich* or on Alderney, they were now surrounded by an overwhelmingly hostile civilian population. Contact between the camp inmates and the French population could not be prevented. In full view of the SS guards and apparently without fear, French men and women approached the inmates, asked them questions, and gave them food. The inmates experienced great readiness to help on the part in the villages through which they passed as they were transported on trucks to the worksites.<sup>113</sup> The unconcealed expression of sympathy by the French population greatly irritated the SS, who at first reacted with restraint. The SS tried to deter the local residents by banning contact with inmates and proclaiming them 'bandits and murderers'. However, such efforts were to little avail in occupied France, as an inmate recalls: 'After work we walked back along the Rue Farée, where all the people seemed to be our friends, throwing us food parcels from the windows and doorways.'<sup>114</sup>

So it was difficult terrain for the SS, especially as the Atlantic coast was coming in for increasingly heavy bombing, making it hard for the guard units to keep prisoners under constant surveillance. After the Allied landing on 6 June 1944 the camp inmates became noticeably more restless and refractory. Sabotage increased, as did the number of escape attempts. The SS too became increasingly nervous as they were targeted by resistance fighters. In April 1944, for example, a railway wagon carrying SS troops was derailed in Ascq.<sup>115</sup> The SS also feared an attack by Allied troops and threatened their prisoners that, if the Allies came close, they themselves would 'not live to see liberation'.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>111</sup> SS-WVHA, 29 Dec. 1943, BA NS 19/2065, 57.

<sup>112</sup> BA NS 19/14, 52. The actual allocation of inmates in France to the army or Luftwaffe can be deduced from the billing documents, see HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 230, 46, 53-4, 114-15, 175.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 146.

<sup>113</sup> Kiryllow, *Erinnerungen*, 132-46.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 176.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 129-30.



This persuaded even more inmates to try to escape. In these circumstances Gerhard Weigel, who had been put in command of Construction Brigade V, had great difficulty in maintaining discipline. In the period to June 1944, he referred ten cases of infringement of service regulations to the SS and police court. He had particular problems with the army and Luftwaffe guard units which, despite 'continued and intensive training', were plagued by constant guard-duty offences and attempted escapes. In an attempt to make the possible consequences of guard-duty offences, i.e. punishment by court martial, clear to the Wehrmacht troops, Weigel brought in LXV Army Corps, which had been responsible for all deployment of long-range rockets since November 1943.<sup>117</sup>

Despite the serious warnings to guard units, the number of successful escapes remained high. At the end of June 1944, ninety-one inmates from Construction Brigade V were reported as escaped, while eleven had been shot in real or supposed escape attempts.<sup>118</sup> It is striking that, according to reports to Buchenwald concentration camp on escapes by prisoners in France over a period of months, only two were recaptured. The high number of successful escapes is clearly attributable to the French population's willingness to help. French men and women took the initiative in contacting inmates, discussed escape plans with them, and hid them afterwards, often for months. Zygmunt P., for example, managed to escape in the confusion following an air raid and was hidden and cared for by French people until the arrival of Allied troops.<sup>119</sup> Hans H. got to know a Frenchman at his workplace, with whose help he managed to escape from the camp in Doullens and survive in hiding until the end of the war.<sup>120</sup> Escaped prisoners also joined French resistance groups and fought with them against the German occupying forces.<sup>121</sup>

All in all, it appears that many more guards were needed in occupied France than in the Reich in order to keep a satellite concentration camp under control. To prevent further escapes, it was announced that for every escapee a number of randomly selected inmates would be shot. Survivors have testified that the threat was carried out; by their account, the corpses of victims of such reprisals were left lying at the perimeter fence of the camp in Aumale on several occasions as a deterrent.<sup>122</sup> On 7 July 1944 Weigel deported to Buchenwald 350 inmates suspected of contacting the civilian population and planning to escape.<sup>123</sup> He also ordered various deception measures: SS Construction Brigade V was renamed '7th SS Construction Brigade', and some of the inmates were put into civilian clothes and ordered to let their hair grow so that they could not be identified

<sup>117</sup> BA NS 19/14, 53.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>119</sup> Statement by Zygmunt P., 15 Jan. 1970, ZSL, IV 429 AR 1938/66, 197.

<sup>120</sup> Life history of Hans H., 8 Apr. 1952, ZSL, IV 406 AR-Z 207/73, 491.

<sup>121</sup> Full description in Kiryłłow, *Erinnerungen*, 149–82.

<sup>122</sup> Statement by Kazimierz S., 7 Apr. 1970, ZSL, IV 429 AR 1938/66, 219–20, and statement by Tadeusz G., 1 June 1970, 242.

<sup>123</sup> See HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 136a, entry for 7 July 1944; Interview with Pawel Potozkij, NS-Dok, Z 10.547.

as concentration-camp inmates by the French.<sup>124</sup> These measures prevented further escapes for the time being. By the end of August 1944 only five more inmates had escaped, and another three had been shot attempting to do so.<sup>125</sup> The number of attempts rose again just before the construction brigade was due to be withdrawn from France, since many detainees preferred to take the risk rather than return to the Reich. SS Construction Brigade V nevertheless headed the Buchenwald escape statistics for 1944: from no other satellite camp had so many prisoners escaped.<sup>126</sup> The behaviour of the French population was by no means similar to that of the inhabitants of the Reich, as the WVHA also realized. In June 1944, Section D II of the WVHA, which was responsible for the deployment of camp inmates, reported that, 'according to experience so far', the population of the occupied territories 'affords concentration-camp inmates all possible help for any escape attempt or act of sabotage'.<sup>127</sup>

The population of occupied Belgium also actively supported camp inmates. Shortly after the Allied landing in Normandy, SS Construction Brigade I was transferred from Alderney to Belgium. When their train arrived in late July 1944, the inmates experienced sympathy from the local population for the first time after long years of social isolation. Willi Kreuzberg described the reaction of the Belgian population to the arrival of the concentration-camp inmates in his memoirs: 'People were waving and calling to us on all sides! The Belgians had quickly understood who we were. They threw us cigarettes. The SS got edgy and pushed back anyone who showed himself at a window. We were not discouraged. We felt that, here, anyone who escaped would be taken in and hidden.'<sup>128</sup> The inmates of SS Construction Brigade I were quartered in two schools in Kortemark and Proven, near Ypres,<sup>129</sup> where they were to be deployed on building launch ramps for V-weapons. They were amazed by the contrast between the behaviour of German society, to which they had been accustomed, and that of the Belgian population: 'For us inmates, the time we spent in Belgium was perhaps the best possible concentration-camp existence. The local population brought us *everything*, huge amounts of tobacco (some of us had pillow-cases full of the stuff!), bread and fruit, sweets, sugar, milk, etc. In addition, the Belgian Red Cross brought us sweets, fruit, and tobacco and cigarettes three times a week!'<sup>130</sup>

In Belgium there was not only open support for prisoners of the SS; there were also joint acts of sabotage by Belgians and camp inmates, as well as

<sup>124</sup> Account by Hans Groth, 29 Feb. 1964, FZH, Hans Schwarz Archive, 13-7-3-7.

<sup>125</sup> See monthly sickness reports for July and August 1944, HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 54.

<sup>126</sup> HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 143, breakdown on 15 Sept. 1944.

<sup>127</sup> Fighter Staff quick report, 8 June 1944, BA R 3/1756, 51, quoted in Wagner, *Produktion des Todes*, 556.

<sup>128</sup> Kreuzberg, *Schutzhäftlinge*, 29.

<sup>129</sup> Memoirs of a former inmate, published in Dutch in May 1946, ZSL, 410 AR 63/77, 132; WGG, notes by Erich Frost.

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Helmut Knöller, 27 Oct. 1944, AGN, No. 1274 (emphasis in original).

escapes with Belgian armed assistance. In a field hospital attached to the camp in Proven, the Belgian resistance installed a radio transmitter in a dove-cote. On the basis of information provided by the inmates, it transmitted the locations of launch ramps under construction, which were then targeted and destroyed by Allied bombers.<sup>131</sup> The great majority of Belgian farmers who brought the water needed to make concrete for the rocket bunkers are reported to have belonged to the resistance and to have helped several camp inmates escape.<sup>132</sup>

Thanks to the massive support of the Belgian population, prisoners managed to escape almost every day. Many escape operations involved what was for the guards an unprecedented degree of militancy. On one occasion three camp inmates escaped from a moving truck while the SS guards came under machine-gun fire from Belgian resistance fighters.<sup>133</sup> In Belgium, as in France, the SS made ready use of their weapons whenever they suspected an attempt to escape. Here too, successful escapes were followed by execution of some of the remaining inmates—as happened, for example, after a multiple escape from a construction site in Poperinge:

Once, when ten of us were in a truck bringing cement to the construction site, six Russians fled. The SS guard chased them and fired at them, but came back empty-handed. He then shot the three remaining Russians with his pistol. I was the only one left . . . Högelow<sup>134</sup> learned of this shortly after we returned to the camp. The next day we were kept in the camp while the guards searched for the escaped inmates. They returned without any escapees, but one of the guards was missing. He was found later that evening, shot dead together with his dog. Högelow then announced that everyone involved in the incident would be shot. That could only mean me, since I was the only one left of the ten. So the next day I fled from the camp together with a Russian.<sup>135</sup>

In Belgium, as in France, there were a large number of successful escapes. When Construction Brigade I was transferred back to the Reich owing to the Allied advance, around 130 inmates were missing. Most of them must have escaped, since only eight deaths are recorded for the period during which the brigade was stationed in Belgium.<sup>136</sup>

A large group of inmates escaped on the morning of 1 September 1944, the day on which the camp was due to be evacuated.<sup>137</sup> The train carrying SS Construction Brigade I took several days to cross through Belgium. Its

<sup>131</sup> Account by Dr B., 15 Nov. 1965, ZSL, IV 404 AR-Z 57/67, 131.

<sup>132</sup> Letter from Helmut Knöller, 27 Oct. 1944, AGN, No. 1274; account by Reinhold Meyer, 12 Sept. 1967, FZH, Hans Schwarz Archive, 13-7-5-5; account by Alfons Kupka, 8 Sept. 1947, AGS, IV/26.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from Helmut Knöller, 27 Oct. 1944, AGN, No. 1274.

<sup>134</sup> SS-Hauptscharführer Otto Högelow, commander of the guard units.

<sup>135</sup> Statement by Heinrich D., ZSL, 410 AR 63/77, 219-20.

<sup>136</sup> Registration of inmates with numbers in the 88000 series, 3 Aug. 1944 to 1 Sept. 1944, HStA Weimar, NS 4 Buchenwald No. 136a.

<sup>137</sup> Letter from Helmut Knöller, 27 Oct. 1944, AGN, No. 1274.

progress was hampered by the retreat of German troops, the flight of Reich Germans, military operations, and the dynamiting of railway tracks by Belgian resistance fighters. It finally crossed the German border around midday on 6 September. The prisoners encountered a strikingly different atmosphere: 'Here in Germany it was exactly the opposite: the local population cheered the soldiers on.'<sup>138</sup>

Although this comparison of the behaviour of surrounding society is limited—it would have been instructive to examine the behaviour of the population in the occupied countries of eastern Europe—it nevertheless shows the functional significance of the surrounding society for the Nazi concentration-camp system. The military situation since the Normandy landing had certainly strengthened the determination of the population and helped to intensify efforts to assist the camp inmates. But this does not suffice to explain the striking difference in the behaviour of the surrounding society in the countries concerned. The readiness to help on the part of the population in the occupied western region considered above sprang from deep-seated rejection of the occupying forces, and their solidarity with prisoners of the Nazi regime held up despite massive punishment of resistance in the occupied territories. In contrast, the majority of the German population behaved loyally right until the last days of the war. The fact that from 1943 onwards their loyalty was only superficial, and people privately distanced themselves from the regime as the tide of war turned,<sup>139</sup> was of no significance for the living conditions and survival of concentration-camp inmates. Few people in the Reich changed their basic attitude to concentration-camp inmates with the Allied lines only days or hours away; and most of those who did so acted not from conviction but with a view to 'insurance' for the post-war period. Of the approximately 714,000 prisoners in concentration camps in January 1945, a third to a half did not survive till the end of the war. Thousands of them were driven through the Reich on 'death marches', beaten, shot, or burned alive in full public view. And, especially in the recapture of escaped inmates, hundreds of men and women from the local population, both young and old, were active accomplices.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Letter from Helmut Knöller, 27 Oct. 1944, AGN, No. 1274.

<sup>139</sup> See Szodrzynski, 'Das Ende'.

<sup>140</sup> For a general overview of the evacuation of the concentration camps see Orth, *Das System*, 270–336.

## V. Concentration Camps Anchored in German Society

GERMAN society played an active part in shaping the concentration-camp system in many ways. After liquidating the opposition by terror tactics in the early stages of the Nazi regime, Heinrich Himmler succeeded in establishing the camps as a long-term institution for combating political and social opponents. Their development was favoured by German society's lack of solidarity with minorities and, to a considerable extent, by its agreement with the racist exclusion of population groups seen as 'inferior'. It was also helped by the early war orientation of society as whole: in addition to their social function, the camps were legitimized by their importance to the economy. When Germany was forced onto the defensive in 1942, the demand for camp inmates increased. Both public authorities and private armament firms did much to promote the spread of the concentration-camp system throughout the Reich.

As detailed examination of the prehistory of the camps has shown, the spread of the camp system did not result either from ideas conceived by the WHVA or from the SS elite's striving for total power. It was the outcome of a dynamic process involving many bodies at national and local level. Officials of the traditional 'Prussian' administration had no qualms about cooperating with the SS in order to carry out the tasks of the public authorities despite wartime shortages. In view of the threat of internal political destabilization during the 1942 air raids, the municipal administrations' concern to obtain auxiliary labour for clearance work coincided with Heinrich Himmler's aim of ensuring internal political stability through subjugation. Such cooperation also reflected German war society's fundamental consensus on 'final victory'.

The cities provided the infrastructure for the satellite concentration camps, recruited additional guard units, and took over organization of the work. Without this infrastructure and organizational backbone, the camps could not have been operated. Yet despite their close involvement in the operation of the camps, the municipal administrations neither availed themselves of the possibility of improving the unmistakably horrendous living conditions for the inmates nor attempted to limit the violence of the SS. What interested the municipal building departments at the end of a month was how many cubic metres of rubble had been removed from the city streets, and the war damage offices checked the invoices for manpower. The number of camp inmates who had died or been deported in the accounting period was of no importance.

From 1942 onwards the concentration camps ceased to be an abstraction—secret places of SS terror—for a large part of the German population. The camps had spread to cities and villages. Prisoners of the SS were quartered

in schools, community halls, sport centres, and barracks on industrial estates. Personal relations developed with SS guards, supply contracts were concluded with the camps, and—in a grey area difficult to quantify—people profited from the concentration-camp economy in a multitude of ways. While there were individual instances of compassion for the inmates, the majority attitude was rejection and indifference. Prisoners who escaped were not hidden: they were handed over to the SS or the police. At no time was the existence of the concentration camps in the Reich under threat; even in the last months of the war, when everything was falling apart, they remained strongly anchored in German wartime society.

In this examination of relations between war society and the concentration camps, the camps taken as examples were run by public authorities. This should not be interpreted as delegation of responsibility to an abstraction—‘society’ (in the final analysis, it is always individuals who act in specific situations in one way or the other on the basis of their individual characters and interests). Nor does it imply that industrial concerns which employed concentration-camp inmates were less involved in the process of exploitation and annihilation;<sup>1</sup> that would be untenable on quantitative grounds alone. From 1944 onwards concentration camps were established mainly in industrial enterprises. And it was particularly in the large-scale construction of underground armaments factories—as in the neighbourhood of the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp—that thousands of camp inmates were done to death in horrendous conditions.

The fact that a concentration-camp system characterized by malnutrition and extreme violence was able to function in the cities in full public view cannot be explained only by ‘moral indifference’ on the part of a population worn down by Allied bombing. On the contrary, it underlines the existence of a broad consensus within Nazi war society that accepted the camps as a widespread way of life, and exclusion from the ‘national community’ as a necessary principle. In the *Altreich* substantive help for camp inmates was provided only by rare individuals. The situation was different in the occupied western territories, where camp boundaries were undermined by sympathy for the inmates, energetic help, and active assistance in escaping. The majority of German war society accepted the camp system and was indifferent to the fate of the inmates. In its attitude of consent coupled with indifference, it was on the side of the perpetrators.<sup>2</sup>

German society did not simply look and turn away.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it constituted the ‘consensual framework’<sup>4</sup> in which terror could spread, especially during

<sup>1</sup> On this see Oliver Rathkolb in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>2</sup> See Herbert, ‘Vernichtungspolitik’, 64–5.

<sup>3</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*. The title of the English original is much broader with regard to the book’s contents than that of the German translation (*Hingeschaut und weggesehen*, i.e. ‘They looked and then looked away’), which was clearly tailored to the taste of the German public.

<sup>4</sup> Dingel, ‘Herrschaft’, 221.

the war. Mass murder in the concentration camps ended only when the military fronts collapsed on all sides. After 8 May 1945, which brought liberation for the inmates and capitulation for German majority society, there spread the remarkable picture of a society that, since 1933, had simply stood by. Retrospectively, a community of fate was created that had reluctantly bowed to Nazi terror in order to safeguard its own existence.<sup>5</sup> The importance of German war society as a constitutive factor in the continued existence of the concentration camps shows that such private and public views are wholly ahistorical. Not least, it challenges the picture of a totalitarian dictatorship that rested on the power of the minority and the impotence of the majority.

<sup>5</sup> Averdunk and Ring, *Geschichte der Stadt Duisburg*, 342–3.



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# D. Decisions to Murder and to Lie: German War Society and the Holocaust

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## I. Introduction

HARDLY anyone has ever claimed the Holocaust was a good thing. Neither during the war nor afterwards was the murder of the European Jews seen as a good deed, and the most dogged advocates of the mass annihilation viewed it as a ‘necessary evil’. Adolf Hitler described only the terror that spread ahead of the murderers as positive: ‘It is good when terror, the knowledge that we are exterminating Jewry, goes before us.’<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Himmler described the annihilation of the Jews as a ‘page of glory’, not because of the evil act itself, but because the Germans who carried it out ‘stood fast’: ‘To have stood fast through this and – apart from cases of human weakness – to have stayed decent, that has made us hard. *This* is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory in our history.’<sup>2</sup> And Odilo Globocnik, one of the advance guard who implemented the programme of murder in the east, wanted bronze tablets buried in the mass graves to the glory of the murderers—not because their deeds were good but because they had had the courage to do evil: ‘On the contrary, bronze tablets should be buried stating that it was we who had the courage to carry out this momentous and so necessary task.’<sup>3</sup> It is reported that the ordinary men who pressed the trigger, started the carbon-monoxide-producing engine of a gassing truck, or emptied the contents of a can of Zyklon B into a gas chamber, sought to drown their evil deeds in alcohol. None of them had a clear conscience.

While German propaganda succeeded for a time in portraying the war as good for the German people and for Europe, and morally justified as ‘defensive’, it never had any similar success with regard to the planning and execution of the ‘final solution of the Jewish question’. The German population

<sup>1</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87 (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Consideration may perhaps be given, at some much later date, to whether the German people should be told more about it. I think it better that we—we as a whole—have borne the burden for our people, have taken the responsibility upon ourselves [responsibility for a deed, not an idea], and that we should take the secret with us to the grave’, speech to Reich and Gauleiters in Poznań, 6 Oct. 1943, Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 169 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> Gerstein report, 4 May 1945, LKA Bielefeld, 5, 2 NS, No. 31.

knew from the outset, already before the deportations began, that nothing good was in store for the Jews.

The murder of the European Jews was indisputably an evil deed. In an examination of German war society and the Holocaust, the issue that arises is that of the will to do evil. Rather than positing an exterminatory anti-Semitism specific to German society,<sup>4</sup> the will to do evil must be examined in terms of its external manifestations.

Going beyond the question of the initiators and murderers themselves, the aim here is to consider, in the restricted framework thus defined, how German war society was capable of murdering the European Jews. The enabling conditions are examined in two main areas: the first is the reciprocal relationship between the war and the Holocaust, the second that between German war society and the Holocaust.

The discussion concentrates on German war society, although almost all of Europe was under German rule at the time and most European societies were involved in the murder of the European Jews in one way or other. The centre of gravity is German-occupied eastern Europe, where the Holocaust took place.

<sup>4</sup> See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, and Birn, *Revising the Holocaust*.

## II. Holocaust and War

If Hitler had not started a war, there would have been no Holocaust. Clearly, the essence of the Holocaust was not the murder of the 213,930 'Jews by religion'<sup>1</sup> who, despite the loss of their human and civil rights,<sup>2</sup> and despite persecution and ill treatment, remained in Germany even after war began in September 1939.<sup>4</sup> It was the planned and brutally implemented murder of *foreign* Jews in parts of Europe that were conquered in turn as the war proceeded. In that sense, war was the 'father' of the Holocaust,<sup>5</sup> and any rational approach to the process of industrial mass extermination must take Hitler's war plans as its starting point.

War alone changed National Socialist 'Jewish policy', whose main aim right up to the summer of 1939—even after the organized hooligan anti-Semitism of 'Kristallnacht'—had been general Jewish emigration.<sup>6</sup> That policy was confirmed following both the Anschluß with Austria and the pogrom on 9 November 1938. After the Germans marched into Austria in March 1938, the pressure on Austrian Jews to emigrate increased so much—not least because of their total exclusion from economic life—that by 20 August of that year Adolf Eichmann himself took over as *de facto* head of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration he had set up in Vienna. The Central Office removed Jews from the country in a 'conveyor-belt' process involving confiscation of their remaining possessions, and dispatched Jewish officials abroad to negotiate immigration and foreign currency concessions.<sup>7</sup> Eichmann's methods served as an example for the whole Reich. On 12 November 1938, at a meeting he chaired on the 'Jewish question', Hermann Göring accepted a proposal from Reinhard Heydrich to establish a Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration. It was set up on 24 January 1939 with Heydrich formally in charge and day-to-day management in the hands of Eichmann's immediate superior, Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo. Ignorant of Hitler's war plans, Heydrich proposed 'a campaign of Jewish emigration . . . lasting at least eight to ten years'.<sup>8</sup> However, the peacetime conference of anti-semitic statesmen that Hitler had been dreaming of ('Antisemites of the world unite!')<sup>9</sup>, which

<sup>1</sup> Figure from May 1939 census, see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 224.

<sup>2</sup> Special legislation regarding Jews in the National Socialist state comprised 1,448 laws and ordinances restricting Jewish existence in the Reich prior to 1 Sept. 1939.

<sup>3</sup> See *Zeugen sagen aus*, 15–77.

<sup>4</sup> Some 300,000 Jews fled the German Reich between 1933 and 1939; see *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 1234–6.

<sup>5</sup> 'War is the father of all things', Heraclitus, fragment B53, repr. in *The Older Sophists*.

<sup>6</sup> *Die Judenpolitik des SD*, 54–64.

<sup>7</sup> Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 162–5, 187–8.

<sup>8</sup> Stenographic record of part of a conference on the Jewish question chaired by Field Marshal Göring at the RLM on 12 Nov. 1938, IMT, xxviii. 499–540, here 533.

<sup>9</sup> See Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, 138, 148, 53; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 27.

could have resulted in expulsion of the Jews from Europe, failed to materialize. Nor had negotiations between Germany and the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees led to agreement on (compulsory) emigration quotas for Jews from the German sphere of power to Palestine.<sup>10</sup> When the Wehrmacht attacked Poland in September 1939, the SS race planners had not developed any practical ideas on what to do with more than 2 million Polish Jews. Instead, the SS *Einsatzgruppen* deployed in Poland unleashed a wave of arbitrary, bestial violence that continued even after the Poles surrendered.

Hitler followed the victory over Poland, like every subsequent victory, with the announcement within a month of his 'irrevocable decision'—equally surprising on each occasion—to embark on a further military campaign.<sup>11</sup> By so doing, he postponed the 'final solution of the Jewish question' to the post-war period, along with a host of other intended National Socialist 'solutions'. The 'solution of the church question',<sup>12</sup> the 'solution of the homosexual question',<sup>13</sup> the 'solution of the gypsy question',<sup>14</sup> and the 'solution of the mixed-race question'<sup>15</sup>—to name but a few—were all on the post-war agenda. Unlike the other 'solutions', however, the 'final solution of the Jewish question' was incorporated into the war at a specific point in time. It was therefore the only one to be implemented, since there was no 'post-war period' under Hitler's rule.

# I. PLANS FOR THE 'FINAL SOLUTION OF THE JEWISH QUESTION' AFTER THE WAR

On 21 September 1939, when the German units that had pushed too far eastwards were already pulling back from conquered Polish territory in accordance with the Hitler–Stalin pact to make way for the Red Army,<sup>16</sup> Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of Security Police and SD, sent a priority letter to the commanders of the security police's *Einsatzgruppen*. Under the heading 'The Jewish question in occupied territory', he began by pointing out that 'the total measures planned (i.e. the final aim) must be kept strictly secret'.<sup>17</sup> He then explained that:

A distinction must be made between:

- 1) the final aim (which will take some time) and
- 2) partial operations in pursuit of the final aim (which can be carried out in the short term). The measures planned require the most thorough preparation from both the technical and the economic point of view.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the conference at Evian-les-Bains, 6–15 July, 1938, and the ensuing negotiations of the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, see Bauer, *Jews for Sale?*, 30–43.

<sup>11</sup> See Jersak, 'A Matter of Foreign Policy'.

<sup>12</sup> See Dierker, *Himmlers Glaubenskrieger*.

<sup>13</sup> See Grau, 'Final Solution of the Homosexual Question?'

<sup>14</sup> See Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*.

<sup>15</sup> See Meyer, 'Jüdische Mischlinge'.

<sup>16</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, ii, 118–19.

<sup>17</sup> Heydrich to *Einsatzgruppen* commanders, re Jewish Question in Occupied Territory, 21 Sept. 1939, repr. in *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*, 37–41.

<sup>18</sup> *Faschismus—Getto—Massenmord*, 37–41.

A similar form of words occurred almost two years—and many military campaigns—later in the authorization for Heydrich that Göring signed on 31 July 1941: 'In addition to the task already assigned to you by decree dated 24 Jan. 1939, that of achieving the best possible solution of the Jewish question in the prevailing circumstances in the form of emigration or evacuation, I hereby instruct you to make all necessary organizational and material preparations for a total solution of the Jewish question throughout the German sphere of influence in Europe.'<sup>19</sup>

It has not so far been possible to prove that a specific 'final aim' amounting to genocide already existed in autumn 1939. In any case, all plans and planning from autumn 1939 to summer 1941 were either approved as provisional by Hitler himself or postponed until after the war—and thereby often made obsolete. The underlying reason may have been that, after each of his military campaigns, Hitler hoped to come to terms with Britain<sup>20</sup>—and thus have the possibility, in line with pre-war intentions, of expelling all European Jews either to Palestine or, as later mooted, to Madagascar or Siberia. Since Hitler kept all plans for deportation to the east in abeyance until August 1941, none of them achieved their objectives. Of 30,000 gypsies, only 2,800 were deported; ghettoization of the approximately 550,000 Jews in the eastern territories incorporated into the Reich was at first unsystematic and hesitant; and deportation of the 350,000 'Reich Jews' was not approved by Hitler.<sup>21</sup> Thus the 'final solution of the Jewish question' was a variable: only in August 1941, when hopes of a peace settlement with Britain were destroyed and Hitler's thugs had long since begun murdering independently and ever more intensively, was 'industrial mass murder' finally assigned as its content.<sup>22</sup>

#### (a) *The Polish Campaign*

With the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939, and in particular after Britain and France declared war two days later, forced emigration was no longer a realistic 'solution of the Jewish question'. Believing their time had come, those bent on murder showed their ugly face for the space of a moment. The governor of the Lublin district, SS-Brigadeführer Friedrich Schmidt, observed that the 'very marshy' area around the river San could serve as a Jewish reservation—'a measure that might well achieve extensive decimation of the Jews'.<sup>23</sup> Governor-General Hans Frank speculated as follows on the consequences of establishing a 'large concentration area': 'It will be a hard winter. If there is no bread for Poles, let there be no complaints . . . Short shrift for the Jews. It will be a pleasure to be able to tackle the Jewish race physically at last.

<sup>19</sup> Göring's instruction to Heydrich, 31 July. 1941, IMT, xxvi. 266–7.

<sup>20</sup> On relations with Britain see, above all, Henke, *England in Hitlers politischem Kalkül*, and Hillgruber, 'England in Hitlers außenpolitischen Konzeption'; Weinberg, 'Hitler and England', omits decisive sources.

<sup>22</sup> See Jersak, 'Die Interaktion', 334–44.

<sup>21</sup> Aly, *Final Solution*.

<sup>23</sup> Report on Deputy Governor-General Seyß-Inquart's visit to Żyrów on 20 Nov. 1939, IMT, xxx. 84–5.

The more that die, the better. To have the Jews within striking distance is a victory for the Reich.<sup>24</sup> Eduard Kōnekamp, a head of division at the German Foreign Institute in Stuttgart, wrote from Poland to his colleagues: 'Exterminating these subhumans would be in the best interest of the whole world. But exterminating them poses incredibly difficult problems. There are too many of them to shoot. And one simply can't shoot women and children. They reckon on some losses here and there on the evacuation transports.'<sup>25</sup> And Albrecht Haushofer, head of division in the foreign ministry's information department, wrote to his mother: 'I am sitting at table with the man whose task it will be, in the Lublin Jewish ghetto, to freeze and starve to death a large part of the Jews shipped there from Germany.'<sup>26</sup>

Since the expulsion of Jews to other countries had been made much more difficult by the military situation,<sup>27</sup> Reinhard Heydrich, the new head of the RSHA, now had to conceal ideas of murder—couched in terms of 'natural' death by starvation, freezing, and the like—behind a programme of deportation within the German-occupied territories. In so doing, he distinguished between long-term and short-term plans, between the strictly secret 'final aim' and 'partial operations in pursuit of the final aim'.<sup>28</sup>

From mid-September 1939, in the light of the Wehrmacht's military successes, Heydrich discussed new plans for a territorial 'solution of the Jewish question' at various levels.<sup>29</sup> This was done in the framework of Himmler's ideas about organizing German rule in the eastern territories on racial lines. For the Reichsführer SS, conquest in the east created the possibility of initiating a grandiose 'resettlement programme' in eastern Europe in accordance with his racial criteria—a programme that would serve to build a power base for the SS—and of persuading Hitler to grant him the necessary powers.<sup>30</sup> On 14 September Heydrich reported that, regarding the 'Jewish problem in Poland', Himmler had submitted to Hitler 'proposals on which only the Führer can decide, since they will also have far-reaching implications for foreign policy'.<sup>31</sup> He was referring to the establishment of a Jewish reservation—termed a 'foreign-language Gau'—between the Vistula and the Bug on the new German-Soviet demarcation line, to which, as far as possible, all Jews in the 'Greater German Reich' were to be deported. Shortly afterwards, on 21 September 1939, Heydrich reported Hitler's agreement: 'The deportation of Jews to the foreign-language Gau across the demarcation line has been approved by the Führer.'<sup>32</sup> However, Hitler wanted this 'solution' of the 'Jewish question' implemented in an orderly fashion: 'The

<sup>24</sup> Speech by Hans Frank at a meeting with Radom District prefects and town commissars on 25 Nov. 1939, extracts repr. in *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Report by Eduard Kōnekamp, Dec. 1939, quoted in Aly and Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*, 127.

<sup>26</sup> Haushofer, *Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk*, ii. No. 226.

<sup>27</sup> *Die Judenpolitik des SD*, 61–4.

<sup>28</sup> On the discussion see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 652 n. 124.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 252.

<sup>30</sup> Aly, *Final Solution*.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of meeting of security police section heads, 15 Sept. 1939, BA R 58/825.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes of meeting of security police section heads, 27 Sept. 1939, BA R 58/825.



whole process is to be spaced out over a year: the Jews are to be concentrated in ghettos in the cities to ensure better conditions for control and subsequent deportation.<sup>33</sup>

In his victory speech in the Reichstag on 6 October 1939, Hitler himself located the 'attempt to regulate and settle the Jewish problem' in the wider context of 'ethnic reorganization of the *Lebensraum* as a whole'—a process which had its starting point in the victory over Poland and would be extended to 'almost all the countries of southern and south-eastern Europe'.<sup>34</sup> This was only a small preview of his strategy, which had yet to incorporate the 'final solution of the Jewish question'. Eichmann was soon put in the picture: on the same day, 6 October, his superior, Heinrich Müller, instructed him to make preparations for the deportation of 70,000 to 80,000 Jews from the newly formed administrative district of Katowice. The following day Hitler signed a decree on the 'consolidation of German nationhood' and granted Himmler all the delegated powers for 'ethnic purification' he had been seeking.<sup>35</sup> For the time being, however, the 'repatriation' of ethnic Germans from the Baltic and Soviet regions and the resettlement of persons of German origin appeared much more urgent than intermediate steps towards a 'solution' of the 'Jewish question'.<sup>36</sup> 'Operation NISKO', by which a total of 4,700 people were deported to Nisko in south-east Poland in two transports on 20 and 28 October, unloaded on the eastern bank of the San, and, in the absence of an initially planned 'transit camp', harried eastwards by the accompanying guard units in the direction of the Soviet zone,<sup>37</sup> was immediately cancelled by Eichmann's superior, Hitler having ruled on 17 October that the Government-General must serve as a troop deployment area for future wars.<sup>38</sup> The second transport, on 28 October 1939, was carried out only to 'save the face of the local state police'.<sup>39</sup>

While interaction between the war and the 'Jewish question' had become more acute given the 'possibilities', Hitler's priority, namely the military conduct of the war, indisputably determined the framework within which action could be taken. All the more so as the Wehrmacht again deliberately raised the spectre of the 'Jewish stab in the back'<sup>40</sup> in the First World War: 'In particular, the Wehrmacht high command does not want an accumulation of Jews close to the German-Soviet border.'<sup>41</sup> The document containing this sentence is connected with the long-term plan for the 'final solution of the

<sup>33</sup> Minutes of meeting of security police section heads, 27 Sept. 1939, BA R 58/825.

<sup>34</sup> Reichstag Proceedings, cdlx. 51ff., repr. in Hitler, *Der großdeutsche Freiheitskampf*, 67–100.

<sup>35</sup> For details see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 255.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 261–70.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed account of Operation NISKO, see *ibid.* 256–60; cf. Adolf Eichmann, *Memoiren*, at [www.mazal.org](http://www.mazal.org) (12 July. 2004), URL: [www.mazal.org/various/Eichmann.htm](http://www.mazal.org/various/Eichmann.htm), 161–4.

<sup>38</sup> Führer conference with Chief of OKW on the future organization of Polish relations with Germany (17 Oct. 1939), IMT, xxvi. 378–9.

<sup>39</sup> IMT, xxxvi. 255.

<sup>40</sup> See Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*.

<sup>41</sup> BA R 69/1146, published by Karl-Heinz Roth as 'Generalplan Ost und der Mord an den Juden: Der Fernplan der Umsiedlung in den Ostprovinzen aus dem RSHA, Nov.1939', in 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 11 (1997), 2, 50–71.

Jewish question' announced by Heydrich on 28 November 1939,<sup>42</sup> which has not yet been found. There can be no doubt that Heydrich envisaged the 'final solution' would be implemented only after the war.

The political context, in which account was taken of the influence of 'world Jewry' on Germany's enemies in the war, is also made clear by a note from the Jewish Department of the SD (SS security service) dated 19 December 1939 supporting the idea of a temporary 'reservation' in Poland: 'From a foreign policy viewpoint, a reservation would also be a good means of putting pressure on the western powers. At the end of the war it might perhaps enable us to raise the question of a worldwide solution.'<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, Germany was still at war with the western powers. On 8 September 1939, long before Poland surrendered, Hitler had already announced his immutable determination to attack France,<sup>44</sup> and the possibility of a separate peace with Britain was being explored.<sup>45</sup> So the 'final solution'—the deportation envisaged for a later stage—would have to wait at least until after the war in the west.

For the victims, of course, the period between the Polish and French campaigns was far from just a strategic interlude on the road to a 'final solution of the Jewish question'. It was the beginning of a long horror story. Their lives were threatened by anti-Semitic excesses and arbitrary violence on the part of SS troops, soldiers, ethnic Germans, and Poles. The immediate loss of all legal security caused permanent, nerve-racking anxiety. Enclosure in ghettos meant not only the loss of freedom of movement, but social misery. Loss of property plunged the victims into total poverty. And the establishment of 'Jewish councils' was more than an act of deliberate humiliation: it created moral dilemmas for council members in which the German torturers took sadistic delight.

### (b) *The French Campaign*

When the Wehrmacht launched its attack on France on 10 May 1940 it had hopes of a swift victory, but could not rule out years of trench warfare as in the First World War. The army equipment department accordingly allocated more steel for barbed wire and obstacles than for tank manufacture, and armament production was planned to increase only in October 1940 and reach its peak in autumn 1941.<sup>46</sup>

In these circumstances a quick 'solution of the 'Jewish question' was inconceivable. Himmler himself made this clear in a speech to Gauleiters on 29 February 1940: 'The most I intend this year—*assuming that the war lasts the whole year*—is to proceed with the deportation of Jews to the extent that numbers permit.'<sup>47</sup> On 24 March 1940, having regard to the transport situation among

<sup>42</sup> On Heydrich's announcement of 28 Nov. 1939 see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 263 n. 142; in his memoirs Eichmann mentions only the short-term plans, see Eichmann, *Memoiren*, 132–3.

<sup>43</sup> 'Endlösung des deutschen Judenproblems', 19 Dec. 1939, BA R 58/544, II–122.

<sup>44</sup> Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 67.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch*, 98, 100 (24 and 29 Sept. 1939).

<sup>46</sup> Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 32–4.

<sup>47</sup> Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 138–9 (emphasis added).

other things, Göring prohibited all deportation to the Government-General without his personal approval or that of Governor-General Frank.<sup>48</sup> This too meant postponing the 'final solution of the Jewish question' till after the war.

In January 1940 Himmler, as Reich commissioner for the consolidation of German nationhood, was apprised of an Army high command project for 'planned development of permanent fortifications in the east'.<sup>49</sup> Given the prevailing situation, the project greatly suited his purposes. He was much more interested in the resettlement of occupied Poland than in military fortifications, and saw an opportunity to decimate the Polish Jews through forced labour. To that end he took up a suggestion from Odilo Globocnik, the SS and police leader in Lublin, who had proposed 'using Jewish forced labour to dig a trench 40 m to 50 m wide to a depth of 1.50 m below groundwater level'—the workforce to consist of no less than 2.5 million Jews, roughly half the total Jewish population in the German sphere of influence at the time.<sup>50</sup> The Army high command looked at the plan seriously and approved it in March 1940, although its military value was highly questionable and Border Command Central did not want 'Jewish columns' deployed in the area.<sup>51</sup> Work on the project began under SS direction with the section from the Bug to the San, but by the beginning of 1941 a mere 13 kilometres had been completed<sup>52</sup>—'useless from the military point of view . . . and executed amateurishly'.<sup>53</sup>

With the astonishing lightning victory over France in the summer of 1940, which became clear after only a few weeks of battle, Hitler's strategy<sup>54</sup> changed, and so did the plans concerning the 'Jewish question'. The enthusiasm that gripped Hitler's military leaders—in the wake of victory, eight of them were promoted to field marshal<sup>55</sup>—spread to the racial planners. In summer 1940 Germany's political and military leaders felt the world lay at their feet. They believed they could achieve world domination through a series of blitzkrieg offensives launched from Europe,<sup>56</sup> force Britain to sue for peace, and carve up the world on that basis.<sup>57</sup> For Europe's Jews, Hitler declared in August 1940, there was plenty of room in America—it is not clear from the context whether he was referring to the time before or after a German-British victory over the United States.<sup>58</sup> The ideas of murder that had been rampant after the conquest of Poland mingled with that of a single world Jewish reservation under

<sup>48</sup> Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 269 n. 172.

<sup>49</sup> ObdH/GenStdH/Gr. Landbefestigung No. 55/40 g.Kdos., 30 Jan. 1940, BA-MA RH 53-23/56.

<sup>50</sup> Report from liaison officer GOC East to Governor-General, 7 Feb. 1940, BA-MA RH 53-23/56; Halder, *KTB*, i. 182-4 (5 Feb. 1940). See also Müller, *Hitlers Ostkrieg*, 15-23; Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung*, 110-11.

<sup>51</sup> Müller, *Hitlers Ostkrieg*, 20-1.

<sup>52</sup> Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung*, 165-7.

<sup>53</sup> Müller, *Hitlers Ostkrieg*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, remains the basic work.

<sup>55</sup> Namely: Bock, Leeb, List, Keitel, Kluge, Reichenau, Rundstedt, and Witzleben.

<sup>56</sup> See Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, 316-97; Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 437-41; Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, 48-52; Jersak, 'Blitzkrieg Revisited', 569-70.

<sup>57</sup> See 'Gesichtspunkte für die wirtschaftliche Gestaltung des Friedens', 30 May 1940, which begins: 'This note assumes that final victory has been achieved, i.e. that England, too, accepts all German conditions', repr. in *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Bildern und Dokumenten*, i. 219.

<sup>58</sup> Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 338.

an SS governor<sup>59</sup> in which the Jews, deprived of adequate life support, would gradually die a 'natural' death. The first fruit of these imaginings was revival of the old anti-Semitic idea of deporting all Europe's Jews to Madagascar.<sup>60</sup>

As was typical of the Nazi state, the various institutions fought among themselves for Hitler's favour in regard to the new projects. Himmler was the first to claim the Madagascar plan for himself. On the morning of 25 May 1940, in Hitler's 'mountain lair' headquarters at Rodert, near Münstereifel,<sup>61</sup> he handed the Führer his 'memorandum on the treatment of foreign peoples in the east',<sup>62</sup> in which, with regard to the 'solution of the Jewish question', he expressed his hope that 'Jews as a category . . . would be completely eliminated by the possibility of mass emigration of all Jews to Africa or a colony'.<sup>63</sup> Shortly afterwards Eichmann began work on a Madagascar project at the RSHA.

Himmler had taken the lead for a moment in the institutional battle for the 'final solution project', but the foreign ministry soon caught up with him. Foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop had instructed his staff to draw up plans for forced resettlement of the Jews in Madagascar only two days after Himmler's visit to Hitler's HQ,<sup>64</sup> but the first results were available more quickly in the form of a memorandum from legation counsellor Franz Rademacher dated 3 June 1940.<sup>65</sup> Its subject was nothing less than 'fundamental determination of German war aims with regard to the Jewish question', and it identified three 'options' in the matter:

- a) All Jews out of Europe.
- b) Separation of eastern and western Jews: eastern Jews, who constitute the more creative and more talmudically entrenched repository for the future Jewish intelligentsia, remain in German hands as security (Lublin?) to neutralize the American Jews. Western Jews out of Europe (Madagascar?).
- c) Jewish national home in Palestine (danger of a new Rome!).<sup>66</sup>

Himmler responded to the foreign ministry's memorandum even before foreign minister Ribbentrop, and his reply is of the greatest significance for the subsequent development of plans for the 'final solution'. On 3 July 1940 Himmler came down in favour of Rademacher's *second option*, i.e. the separation of eastern and western Jews and the treatment of eastern Jews as hostages.<sup>67</sup> Despite this, the Madagascar plan drawn up by the foreign ministry was based on the first option, removal of all Jews from Europe—though not before the

<sup>59</sup> The head of the Führer's chancellery, Philipp Bouhler, already saw himself as the new governor of Madagascar, see NA, T 84, R 387.

<sup>60</sup> Brechtken, 'Madagaskar für die Juden'; Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*.

<sup>61</sup> Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, 672.

<sup>62</sup> Himmler, 'Denkschrift'.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 197. For the context see Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 317; Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden*, 225.

<sup>64</sup> Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 317.

<sup>65</sup> Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden*, 228; Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 324.

<sup>66</sup> 'Gedanken über die Arbeiten und Aufgaben des Ref. D III', 3 June 1940, PA, Inland II, A/B 347/3.

<sup>67</sup> Müller to Brandt, 3 July 1941, NA, T 581, R 39A.

island of Madagascar had been placed 'under the administration of a German police governor . . . subject to the authority of the Reichsführer SS' so as to keep 'the Jews in German hands as security for the future good behaviour of their racial comrades in America'.<sup>68</sup> This marked an initial rapprochement between the foreign ministry and the SS with regard to the implementation of plans regarding the Jews, to which Heydrich had referred in a letter to Ribbentrop dated 24 June 1940: 'In January 1939 Field Marshal Göring entrusted me with responsibility for implementing Jewish emigration throughout the territory of the Reich . . . However, the problem in its entirety—we are already talking about 3¼ million Jews in the territories under German jurisdiction—can no longer be solved by emigration. A territorial final solution is needed. I must ask to be involved in any discussions on the final solution of the Jewish question which you envisage holding in the near future.'<sup>69</sup>

Rademacher subsequently recorded that Ribbentrop had issued an instruction to the effect 'that the solution of the Jewish question in the peace treaty . . . should be drawn up in agreement with the staff of the Reichsführer SS'.<sup>70</sup>

Ribbentrop had yet to take a position on Rademacher's alternative proposals of 3 June when Hitler announced his decision on 31 July 1940 to attack the Soviet Union next on ideological grounds, irrespective of all strategic considerations.<sup>71</sup> Two days later, anticipating Hitler's veto on implementation of the 'final solution' during the war, Ribbentrop declared in favour of Rademacher's *first option*, i.e. the removal of all Jews from Europe after the war.<sup>72</sup> The next day Hitler met with Otto Abetz, the German ambassador in Paris, and declared his intention to solve the 'Jewish question' for the whole of Europe after the war. It was in this connection that the Führer brought the territory of the United States, which could accommodate 'millions of Jews',<sup>73</sup> into the discussion of the 'final solution'. The only point that remains unclear is whether Hitler was referring to the current military campaign or to the war as a whole, and whether by 'after the war', he may have meant 'after the war with the United States'.

The 'final solution of the Jewish question' had arrived on the political agenda in the wake of victory over France, but Hitler's pronouncement that the 'final solution' could be envisaged only after the war immediately took it off the agenda again. When, on 15 August 1940, the RSHA presented a detailed Madagascar plan drawn up by Adolf Eichmann, Theodor Dannecker, and Erich Rajakowitsch,<sup>74</sup> it was already of so little political interest that Heydrich

<sup>68</sup> 'Die Judenfrage im Friedensvertrage', memorandum from state undersecretary Rademacher, 9 July 1940, repr. in *DGFP*, D, x. doc. 101.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Heydrich to Ribbentrop, 24 June 1940, repr. in Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 327.

<sup>70</sup> Minute by Rademacher, 30 Aug. 1940, PA, Inland IIg, 177.

<sup>71</sup> See Hillgruber, 'Noch einmal', 239–55; Weinberg, 'Der Überfall auf die Sowjetunion', 177–85.

<sup>72</sup> Ribbentrop to Luther, 2 July 1940, PA, Inland IIg, 177.

<sup>73</sup> 'Exposé des directives données par Hitler à Abetz et l'organisation de l'Ambassade du Reich à Paris', 22 Nov. 1945, CDJC, LXXI–114; see Abetz, *Das offene Problem*, 141–3; Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 338.

<sup>74</sup> PA, Inland IIg, 177, largely repr. in *Ein Stempel hat gefehlt*, 322–31; see Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan*, 340–8.

at first did not even sign it.<sup>75</sup> The German leadership was so busy with Hitler's war preparations and the question of Britain's role in Hitler's plans for world power<sup>76</sup>—in which the campaign against the Soviet Union was assigned the main strategic role—that the alternative of a continental bloc extending from Russia to Spain and the attempt at a military landing on the British Isles were abandoned.<sup>77</sup> Rather than a 'solution of the Jewish question', what was being prepared was racial war in the east.

Those wishing to liquidate 'enemies of the Reich' inconspicuously carried out their experiments in secret for the time being. After the war Ferdinand Hahnzog, commander of the gendarmerie in the district of Lublin, testified to the existence of 'a primitive installation hidden deep in the forest across from Galicia near Bełżec . . . consisting of a hermetically sealed shack into which security police and SD from Zamość injected exhaust fumes from the trucks in which the *morituri* [those about to die] were brought to the site'.<sup>78</sup> According to his testimony, these experiments had already taken place in autumn 1940 or early 1941.

### (c) *The Russian Campaign*

From the outset, the attack on the Soviet Union served two distinct strategic aims on Hitler's part, and has been generally perceived as so doing. The first was to deprive Britain of its last potential ally on the European continent,<sup>79</sup> thereby sounding the end of the territorial war before the 'final struggle' of the Aryans against the Jews. The second was to anticipate part of that 'final struggle' by destroying Moscow as a 'headquarters of world Jewry' and at the same time achieve one of Hitler's ultimate war objectives—the conquest of *Lebensraum* in the east. Specific economic and food supply concerns were added to this hotchpotch of motives only after Hitler had announced his immutable determination to break the Hitler–Stalin pact.<sup>80</sup> The extent to which the strategic and economic justifications were doubted at the very top of the military hierarchy is clear from an entry that Franz Halder, chief of the army general staff, made in his diary following a conversation with the commander-in-chief of the army, Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch: 'Barbarossa: Purpose is not clear. We do not hit the British that way. Our economic potential will not

<sup>75</sup> Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Hillgruber, 'England in Hitlers außenpolitischer Konzeption', 191.

<sup>77</sup> Michalka, *Ribbentrop und die deutsche Weltpolitik*, 287–91; Bezymenskij, 'Der Berlin-Besuch von V. M. Molotov', 199–215; Stegemann, 'Hitlers Ziele im ersten Kriegsjahr', 100; Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, 85.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung*, 205–6.

<sup>79</sup> Fundamental source: Führer conference with commander-in-chief of the army at the Berghof in the presence of chiefs of OKW, WFSt, OQu. I, GenStdH ops. dept., SKL ops. dept., and GenStdLw. on 9 Jan. 1941, KTB OKW, i. 257–8.

<sup>80</sup> Christian Gerlach's argument that the German attack on the Soviet Union was no 'ideological luxury' but 'appeared, from the viewpoint of military strategy, to be the last way out', since by the beginning of 1941 at the latest 'invasion of the Soviet Union had emerged as a bitter necessity for the war economy' (Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 41), is completely untenable and a questionable premiss for his treatment of the issue. See Gerhard Weinberg: 'Thus all speculation about



be substantially improved. Risk in the west must not be underestimated . . . if we are then tied up against Russia, a bad situation will be made worse'.<sup>81</sup>

The louder the strategic doubts about the wisdom of an attack on the Soviet Union voiced in early 1941, the more clearly Hitler articulated his ideological objectives. In March he made clear to his generals in writing that the Russian campaign would be the first part of the 'final struggle' of the Aryans against the Jews: 'The coming campaign is more than a battle of arms: it will also lead to a showdown between two opposing ideologies. To end this war, it will not suffice to defeat the enemy in the field . . . The Judaeo-Bolshevik intelligentsia, the oppressor of the people hitherto, must be eliminated'.<sup>82</sup>

The new character of the campaign as an ideological battle against 'Judaeo-Bolshevism' was reflected immediately in five criminal orders.<sup>83</sup> The 'Guidelines on Special Matters attached to Directive No. 21 (Barbarossa)' of 13 March 1941<sup>84</sup> gave Himmler 'special tasks by order of the Führer, stemming from *the need finally to settle the conflict* between two opposing . . . systems' and, together with the 'Instructions on the Deployment of the Security Police and SD within the Army' of 28 April 1941,<sup>85</sup> legitimized the *Einsatzgruppen*'s murder operations behind the front lines. The decree on the 'Application of Martial Law in the Barbarossa Area and on Special Measures to be Adopted by the Troops' of 13 May 1941<sup>86</sup> stipulated that Soviet civilians committing criminal acts had no right to legal process and that, in the case of criminal acts committed by German troops, there was no compulsion to prosecute 'even when the act constitutes at the same time a military crime or offence'. The 'Guidelines for the Behaviour of Troops in Russia' of 19 May 1941<sup>87</sup> swore in each soldier for the struggle against the Jewish peril and the 'deadly enemy, Bolshevism'. Finally, the 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars' of 6 June 1941<sup>88</sup> stipulated that political commissars of the Red Army were to be 'shot on the spot as a matter of principle'. Hitler's basic premiss was that this first part of the 'final struggle' would be *inhuman* in the truest sense of the word. Accordingly, he himself issued in advance such orders as would banish the last shreds of humanity from prosecution of the war. The height of this perversion was reached later in Auschwitz when Zyklon B was deliberately transported to the gas chambers in Red Cross trucks.

supposed reasons for the German attack on the Soviet Union that are based on the events of the winter of 1940-1 or the first months of 1941 are complete nonsense. The decision to follow the western campaign by a campaign in the east was firmly established from the summer of 1940 on,' Weinberg, 'Überfall auf die Sowjetunion', 181.

<sup>81</sup> Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, ii, 314 (28 Jan. 1941); see KTB OKW, i, 96; Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, 369-72; Uhlig, 'Einwirken Hitlers', 212.

<sup>82</sup> KTB OKW, i, 341 (3 Mar. 1941).  
<sup>83</sup> On the discussion of the criminal orders see Förster in *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 481-5; Krausnick, 'Kommissarbefehl', 682-738; Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, 28-61; Breitman, *The Architect*, 148; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 81-94.

<sup>84</sup> IMT, xxvi, 53-8, here 54 (emphasis added).

<sup>85</sup> Repr. in *Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion* (1984), 303-4, doc. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Repr. *ibid.* 305-8, doc. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Repr. *ibid.* 312, doc. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Repr. *ibid.* 313-4, doc. 8.



Given that Hitler saw the Russian campaign as part of his imagined 'final struggle' against the Jews—a part to be carried out in advance in order to eliminate Moscow as a 'headquarters of world Jewry'—that campaign was not (yet) synonymous with the 'final solution of the Jewish question'. The precondition for the 'final solution' was 'final victory', which was still envisaged as involving the end of hostilities with Britain and the United States.<sup>89</sup> Hitler's top generals, who consciously supported and helped achieve radicalization of the war by preparing the criminal orders, nevertheless wanted nothing to do with the 'final solution of the Jewish question'. They were well aware that, after the campaign against the Soviet Union, a 'final struggle' was still to come. At a top-level conference at army high command three weeks before the attack began, Maj.-Gen. Kurt von Tippelskirch, senior quartermaster IV on the army general staff, declared: 'The war against Russia should and will give Germany the final military and economic freedom in the rear that is required for the final struggle against the British Empire and, ultimately perhaps, the Anglo-American world empire.'<sup>90</sup> For Hitler, this final struggle for world domination always came down to a struggle against the Jews.

Planning for the 'final solution' accordingly took on another dimension in the period between the French and Russian campaigns. On 4 December 1940 Eichmann prepared figures and dates concerning the 'Jewish question' for a speech that Himmler delivered a few days later to a meeting of Reichsleiters and Gauleiters.<sup>91</sup> Eichmann calculated that no fewer than 5.8 million Jews would have to be included in the 'final solution'. Two aspects of his calculations are significant when we attempt to reconstruct the planning for the 'final solution'. The first is that Jews from all over Europe were included: the racial-ideological primacy of the 'final solution' was considered equally valid for the whole of Europe, however distant from the self-radicalizing local 'necessities' imposed in the east. The second is that the Soviet Jews do not figure in Eichmann's calculations even though, as is clear from the same note, he was aware of Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union. From that we may conclude that the 'yet-to-be-determined territory' for the 'territorial final solution' envisaged since the summer of 1940—i.e. deportation of all Europe's Jews to a reservation in which they would die out—was now to be sought in the Soviet Union itself. The general time-schedule and Hitler's supremacy in the conduct of military operations are quite clear from a report by Theodor Dannecker, director of the Jewish Affairs Department of the commander of security police and SD for Belgium and France, dated 21 January 1941:

In accordance with the will of the Führer, a final solution of the Jewish question in the part of Europe under German rule or control is to be implemented after the war. The chief of security police and SD has already been instructed by the Führer, via the RF-SS

<sup>89</sup> See Jersak, 'A Matter of Foreign Policy'.

<sup>90</sup> Briefing by OQu IV at OKH/HQu conference on 4 June 1941, BA/MA, RH 2/82.

<sup>91</sup> Eichmann's note to Himmler, 4 Dec. 1940, BA NS 19/3979. See Aly, *Final Solution*, 75–7, 124–8.

and the Reich marshal, to submit a project for the final solution. Thanks to the wide experience of the staff of the CdS and SD, and the preparatory work long under way, the main lines of the project have been drawn up. It is clear that it will be a gigantic task whose success requires the most painstaking preparations. These must cover both the preliminary work on deportation of the whole Jewish population and the detailed planning of a settlement operation in the yet-to-be-determined territory.<sup>92</sup>

Thus the 'final solution' was not a self-radicalizing process which Hitler accompanied only on the fringe, if at all. It was a task requiring official authorization which Hitler had assigned to Heydrich via Göring—a task about which the Führer and his Reich marshal were kept constantly informed and on which they constantly took decisions.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, until 'final victory' was guaranteed, the 'final solution' would have to wait till the end of the war. In planning the Russian campaign, Hitler and his generals assumed the Wehrmacht would inflict a devastating defeat on the Soviet troops within ten weeks, i.e. by 31 August 1941 at the latest: 'It is to be expected that once it has been hit, the Russian army will undergo an even greater collapse than France in 1940.'<sup>94</sup> When, at the end of July 1941, it became apparent that the Red Army had indeed suffered enormous losses in the vast Russian expanses, but that this would not suffice to defeat the Soviet Union, Hitler accommodated Himmler's efforts to step up the extermination of Jews in the east. Then, on 15 August 1941, in a fundamental change of strategy, he designated the destruction of the Jews as a prior condition for victory. The 'final solution' was now part of the war.

## 2. THE BASIS OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The long controversy between 'functionalists' and 'intentionalists',<sup>95</sup> which was interrupted and transformed by the *Historikerstreit*<sup>96</sup> and the Goldhagen debate<sup>97</sup> and ended with the Irving trial,<sup>98</sup> had a surprising outcome. Although such an order has never been found in writing, almost all historians now proceed on the assumption that Hitler gave an order for the murder of the European Jews.<sup>99</sup> This position flatly contradicts the general conclusions drawn

<sup>92</sup> Dannecker report, 21 Jan. 1941, facsimile in Steur, *Theodor Dannecker*, 185–8, here 185.

<sup>93</sup> On the discussion of the plans submitted to Hitler and Göring see Jersak, 'Hitler and the Interaction', 40–7; Eichmann, *Memoiren*, 208–10.

<sup>94</sup> Hitler to Brauchitsch on 4 Dec. 1940, quoted in KTB OKW, i. 205.

<sup>95</sup> See *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

<sup>96</sup> See *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*

<sup>97</sup> See *Ein Volk von Mördern?*; Wippermann, *Wessen Schuld?*

<sup>98</sup> *The Irving Judgment*; Menasse, *Der Holocaust vor Gericht*; Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*.

<sup>99</sup> Breitman, *The Architect*; Browning, *Nazi Policy*; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*; Gerlach, 'Die Wannsee-Konferenz'; Hartog, *Der Befehl zum Judenmord*; Herbert, *Labour and Extermination*; Jersak, 'Die Interaktion'; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung* and *The Unwritten Order*; expert testimony for the defence in Irving vs. Lipstadt, in: 'Holocaust Denial on Trial' (12 July 2004),

from the individual studies of local conditions in the German-occupied areas of eastern Europe undertaken as eastern European archives were opened up in the 1990s, many of which set Hitler's role against the autonomous radicalizing initiatives of local commanders and take the institutional policy chaos surrounding the war in the east as their starting point.<sup>100</sup>

However, the contention that Hitler issued an order is open to criticism on the grounds of a fundamental lack of analytical clarity regarding both the terminology used and the content of the order. In the relevant German literature, the terms 'Entschluß' (resolve), 'Entscheidung' (decision between options), and 'Befehl' (order) seem to be used indiscriminately and interchangeably, and the process itself is variously described as 'Entschlußbildung' (formation of intent),<sup>101</sup> 'Entscheidungsfindung' (decision-making), or 'Gedankenbildung' (concept formation).<sup>102</sup> The content of Hitler's resolve, decision, or order is described optionally as 'the solution of the Jewish question', 'the final solution of the Jewish question', 'industrial mass extermination', 'the murder of the European Jews', or simply 'the Holocaust'.<sup>103</sup>

Following the English term 'decision-making', we suggest calling the process 'Entscheidungsfindung', since this concept, in contrast to 'Gedankenbildung', allows for the involvement of a number of persons or bodies. It is also better than 'Entschlußbildung', since it implies that a decision between options is reached, and not simply a resolve to do something. We shall now briefly analyse the basis of the decision-making process.

#### (a) *Prior Resolve and Order*

The question of whether and when Hitler resolved to murder the European Jews is clearly distinct from that of whether and when he issued an order

URL: [www.hdot.org/ieindex.html](http://www.hdot.org/ieindex.html); Safrian, *Eichmann-Männer*; Witte, 'Thesen zur Endlösung der europäischen Judenfrage im Dezember 1941' (unpubl. MS); Witte, 'Zwei Entscheidungen'.

<sup>100</sup> The following may be mentioned without judgement as to their content: *Judenmord in Litauen*; Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front*; Dieckmann, 'Der Krieg und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden'; Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*; Matthäus, 'Jenseits der Grenze'; Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung*; Pohl, *Von der Judenpolitik zum Judenmord*; id., 'Schauplatz Ukraine'; id., *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien*; Porat, 'The Holocaust in Lithuania'; Sandkühler, 'Endlösung' in Galizien.

<sup>101</sup> 'In our formulation, therefore, the decision-making process is defined by the following question: how, when, where, and—if applicable—by whom, were the decision or decisions to kill the European Jews, in a particular order and by particular means, arrived at? Or, put more simply: how did the murder of the European Jews in the Second World War come to take place?', Jäckel, 'Die Entschlußbildung', 11.

<sup>102</sup> See Hillgruber, 'Noch einmal', 252 n. 14; id., *Hitlers Strategie*, 23–4, 524.

<sup>103</sup> 'The German language has no short yet accurate term for the phenomenon. The Hebrew word *Shoah* ("catastrophe"), taken from Isaiah 10: 3, is untranslatable. The term *Holocaust*, which has become usual in English and other languages and is also taken from the Bible (Genesis 22), is inaccurate, given the context of the story of Abraham and Isaac, since the phenomenon in question has nothing to do with a sacrifice. The term "final solution", which Gerald Reitlinger used in 1953 as the title of his book, the first overall treatment of the subject, is unsuitable because it is taken from the jargon of the perpetrators', Jäckel, 'Die Entschlußbildung', 10. 'Anyone who wishes to refer precisely—and in way that overcomes alienation—to the fact that millions of human beings were turned to ashes, must use the word "holocaust" [Holokaust in the German original]', from the testimony of Walter Jens, in Knopp, *Hitlers Holocaust*, 21 (not in English).

to murder them, or an order legitimizing their murder.<sup>104</sup> While there is a consensus that Hitler was determined to exterminate the European Jews, most historians have failed so far to address the question of when he formed that intention.<sup>105</sup> 'That Hitler . . . was bent on an extermination campaign at least against the Jews in Germany . . . can be seen from many other statements. It was a matter of waiting for the opportunity, and historians must certainly seek to establish at what point his determination, which was at first an intention, matured into action in the form of an order.'<sup>106</sup> In point of fact, such an intention could have been formed not only before the beginning of the war but even before the takeover of power.<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, a possible order by Hitler for the murder of the European Jews—even if only a legitimizing one—cannot have been given before the takeover of power, and historians situate it in the period 1940–I.<sup>108</sup> In the debate on the actual decision-making process, those looking for a decision by Hitler have always sought that decision in the form of an order—an order based on prior resolve (be it only the intention to legitimize murder operations retroactively).<sup>109</sup>

The debate about when Hitler gave such an order, which has also engaged the attention of a broader public,<sup>110</sup> suffers nevertheless from the problem of the formation of intent. Although all attempts to date an order by Hitler for the murder of the European Jews *ipso facto* assume an earlier prior resolve on the part of Hitler, scarcely any historians have sufficiently related their dating of the order to the time of the prior resolve.<sup>111</sup> This weakness weighs all the more heavily since there is nevertheless a consensus that Hitler's prior resolve and his order did not coincide, i.e. the order was not immediately articulated as such in a spontaneous 'gut reaction' but was preceded by an ideologically

<sup>104</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 62, was the first to draw attention to this distinction, and Eberhard Jäckel embraced it early on (Jäckel, *Hitler in History*). Christian Gerlach pointed it out again at a conference in Florida in 1998, and went on to use it, though without reference to Jäckel, in Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 630.

<sup>105</sup> The most notable example is Hans Mommsen, who writes, 'It is no accident that formal orders from the dictator for the execution of the "final solution" cannot be identified . . . although he was at the same time the ideological motor behind them,' but does not trouble to analyse the ideological motivating forces in question, Mommsen, *Auschwitz*, 164.

<sup>106</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 64.

<sup>107</sup> Any attempt to tackle the formation of intent on the part of Hitler must necessarily take into account his earliest pronouncements, such as his definition of the goal of anti-Semitism in 1919: 'The final goal, however, must irrevocably remain the removal of the Jews altogether', *Hitler: Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, 90; see Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 28–9; Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936*, 178; Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung; A Blueprint for Power*, 48.

<sup>108</sup> See Browning, *Nazi Policy*, 26–8.

<sup>109</sup> See the considerations concerning a decision by Hitler, which are helpful despite the use of unclear terminology, in Breitman, *The Architect*, 41.

<sup>110</sup> See *FAZ*, 6 Dec. 1997 and 15 June 1999; *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, 3 Jan. 1998; *Die Zeit*, 8 Jan. 1998; *The Times*, 14 Jan. 1998; *New York Times*, 21 Jan. 1998; *Die Welt*, 12 July 1999; also Knopp, *Hitler's Holocaust*, 56–107.

<sup>111</sup> Exceptions are Breitman, *The Architect*; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*; Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung; A Blueprint for Power*; and id., *Hitlers Herrschaft*, which distinguish between resolve and order, and investigate them in conjunction with each other.

determined and variously expressed motivation, the implementation of which is understood as the central issue in the decision-making process.

What is more, basic disagreement persists as to the reference point for an order by Hitler for the murder of the European Jews. One body of thought locates it during the war, and bases various interpretations on whether victory euphoria<sup>112</sup> or the failure of military strategy<sup>113</sup> is taken as the background.<sup>114</sup> Other historians maintain that Hitler's order was fundamentally connected with his prophecy speech in the Reichstag on 30 January 1939 when, before the newsreel cameras of *UFA Wochenschau*,<sup>115</sup> he declared that in the event of another world war 'the result will not be a Bolshevisation of the earth and a victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'.<sup>116</sup> He referred to that prophecy repeatedly in the present tense<sup>117</sup> while the murder of the European Jews was under way,<sup>118</sup> and gave it as a final justification in his will shortly before his cowardly suicide.<sup>119</sup> Since Hitler's prophecy was predicated on pursuit of the war, the hypothesis of an order for the murder of the European Jews unrelated to that prophecy assumes a number of prior conditions that are contradicted by fundamental research into the nature of the Russian campaign—including the assumption that Hitler, who repeatedly referred to his prophecy, did not mean what he said. Resolve and order are chronologically distinct but related substantially—even if not necessarily congruent. The order from Hitler must therefore be seen as expressing the realization of his prior resolve. That being so, it is essential to clarify the circumstances of his resolve as the reference point for his order. In this presentation, we start from the assumption that Hitler's prophecy of 30 January 1939

<sup>112</sup> Browning, *Nazi Policy*; id., 'Hitler and the Euphoria of Victory'; id., 'The Euphoria of Victory'.

<sup>113</sup> Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*; Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* On the debate between Browning and Mayer, see Browning, 'The Holocaust as By-Product?'

<sup>114</sup> Longerich's chronology links various orders by Hitler for the extermination of the Jews to the course of the war, Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 577–86, especially 580 and 585.

<sup>115</sup> Hartog, *Der Befehl zum Judenmord*, 11–12.

<sup>116</sup> 'Today I will again be a prophet. If the international Jewish financiers, inside and outside Europe, succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevisation of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe', Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, ii. 1449.

<sup>117</sup> Mommsen is in total contradiction: 'Hitler's pronouncements on the subject consistently suggest a "final solution of the Jewish question" lying in the future. He stuck to this habit even when the "Holocaust" was almost complete,' Mommsen, *Auschwitz*, 17. Juli 1942, 164.

<sup>118</sup> Hitler referred to his prophecy on 30 Jan. 1941 in a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast (Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1663–4 (not in English)), in connection with Goebbels's visit to Führer HQ on 18 Aug. 1941 (Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 269), in table talk at Führer HQ on 25 Oct. 1941 (Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87), again in his speech at the Sportpalast on 30 Jan. 1942 (Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1828–9), in a message to the Party anniversary celebration on 24 Feb. 1942 (ibid. 1844), at the Sportpalast on 30 Sept. 1942 at the opening of the Wartime Winter Relief Organization (ibid. 1920), at the Munich 'veterans of 1923' commemoration on 8 Nov. 1942 (ibid. 1937), once again at the Party anniversary celebration on 24 Feb. 1943 (ibid. 1992), again at Führer HQ on 13 Feb. 1945 (Hitler, *Hitler's Political Testament*), and finally in the political testament of 29 Apr. 1945 (Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2237).

<sup>119</sup> Hitler, *Hitlers politisches Testament*, 69 (13 Feb. 1945).

was an expression of his resolve to murder the European Jews, and that he intended to act upon it under certain circumstances,<sup>120</sup> which could also arise independently,<sup>121</sup> and in so doing transfer 'annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe' from the realm of possibility to the realm of reality. On that argument, Hitler's resolve preceded 30 January 1939.<sup>122</sup>

(b) *Decision-Making on What? The Content of Hitler's Order*

Anyone dealing with the subject of the Holocaust is faced with a multitude of terms employed at the time to describe this crime against humanity, but the scope and definition of those terms have often been neglected. In discussing the decision-making process, however, clear and unambiguous definition of the content and meaning of individual terms is of major importance. The lack of sufficient research imposes the need for certain explicit procedural clarifications. For example, it has not yet been established whether the terms 'solution of the Jewish question' and 'final solution of the Jewish question' can be used synonymously or whether the difference between 'solution' and 'final solution' necessarily denotes a conceptual leap. The origin of the neologism 'final solution' is also unclear, and its first occurrence has not been definitely established.<sup>123</sup> Several historians have drawn attention to the variable content of the two terms, but there has been little attempt to investigate what particular meaning was assigned to them on a given occasion.

Different terms denoting the murderous treatment of the Jews—'removal', 'annihilation', and 'eradication', referred to in the euphemistic coded language of the extermination camps as 'special actions'—seem to be used indiscriminately in contemporary documents. Euphemisms were also used with regard to deportation of the Jews, which is variously referred to as 'emigration', 'evacuation', or 'resettlement'. The history of the use of these terms has yet to be analysed.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> See considerations on the conditional nature of Hitler's resolve in Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 34–7.

<sup>121</sup> See discussion of whether Hitler's prophecy was an 'announcement of intent' in Kley, 'Intention, Verkündung, Implementierung'.

<sup>122</sup> The distinction made here can be illustrated by an example from the recent German past. Whereas Holocaust research sees the question of an order for implementation as fundamental, historical research into German reunification places the question of the formation of intent/resolve in the forefront: the ten-point plan submitted to the German Bundestag by Chancellor Kohl on 28 Nov. 1989—the announcement of his resolve to reunify the country—is seen as absolutely decisive. Local studies of individual districts of the GDR may in future furnish new details (regarding food supply and economic policy) concerning the implementation of reunification, but they will not change the fact that it began with Kohl's fundamental political resolve and the settlement of 3 Oct. 1990. See *Geschichte der deutschen Einheit*, iii. 58–87; Maier, *Dissolution*, 196–8; Spohr, 'Unified Germany's Ostpolitik', 97–100; *Geschichte der deutschen Einheit*, iv. 97–135; Rice and Zelikow, *Germany Unified*, 118–25.

<sup>123</sup> It is an open question whether the term 'final solution', like the term 'final victory', was not also coined by Erich Ludendorff.

<sup>124</sup> A first attempt was made by Peter Longerich during the Irving trial; see also Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*.



In the present study the term 'Holocaust' is equated with the systematic murder of the European Jews, and 'annihilation' is taken as specifically denoting that murder. This settles the subject of the debate on the decision-making process. The key question is: when did the systematic murder of the European Jews, in the meaning of Hitler's phrase 'annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe', begin? To answer that question, we must first determine when the slogan 'final solution of the Jewish question' came to mean 'systematic murder of the European Jews'.

### 3. SHIFTING THE 'FINAL SOLUTION OF THE JEWISH QUESTION' TO DURING THE WAR

The reasons why the 'final solution of the Jewish question' was repeatedly postponed till after the war were rooted in Hitler's ideology. The Holocaust did not start with the attack on the Soviet Union, nor did the first murder operations of the *Einsatzgruppen* mark its beginning.<sup>125</sup> Until mid-August 1941 those operations were a link in a chain of violence, justified as policing operations, which the *Einsatzgruppen* had already perpetrated in Poland and Serbia.<sup>126</sup> The difference, which had a radicalizing effect, was that this time they were directed against the 'deadly enemy, Bolshevism'. Nevertheless, since the Russian campaign was not intended to be Hitler's last war and—pending British capitulation—further campaigns in the Middle East had already been planned in detail and partially set in train by troop movements from July 1941 onwards,<sup>127</sup> the Führer had forbidden the start of the 'final solution' during the war.<sup>128</sup>

Hitler's role as sole commander-in-chief is undisputed. He alone determined who the next enemy was to be. On his own authority he ordered the occupation of the Rhineland, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the break-up of the rump of the country, the attack on Poland, the occupation of Norway and Denmark, the invasion of the Benelux countries, the French campaign, the preparation and subsequent postponement of the landing in England, the military operations in North Africa and the Balkans, the attack on Germany's ally the Soviet Union, and the war against the United States. He imposed all these orders unwaveringly in the face of resistance from various quarters. From his first campaign against Poland to his final declaration of war on the United States, Hitler acted autocratically and resisted advice.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Herbert, 'Vernichtungspolitik', 49; Dieckmann, 'Der Krieg und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden', 292–306.

<sup>126</sup> See Schmider, *Partisanenkrieg in Jugoslawien*.

<sup>127</sup> OQu I/Op.Abt. (IIb) No. 1306/41 g.Kdos., 2 July 1941, plus appendix: Note re Operation Syria-Palestine-Egypt and land bridge between Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, NA, T 78, R 548; 'Preparation of operations for the post-Barbarossa period', OQu I des Generalstabs des Heeres, No. 430/41 g.Kdos., 3 July 1941, BA-MA H 3/1. See also Hitler to Bock on 4 Aug. 1941, KTB OKW, i. 1041–2; Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, 379–83; *Germany and the Second World War*, iii. 632–3.

<sup>128</sup> For details see Jersak, 'Die Interaktion', 347–9.

<sup>129</sup> See Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 108–16; Jersak, 'A Matter of Foreign Policy', 373–7.



This fact stands in flagrant contradiction to a scenario in which, in the course of a war conducted by Hitler's will and order, a programme to murder the Jews developed beyond the range of the will and decision of a dictator who otherwise had command of the smallest operations by divisions on the eastern front and concerned himself in detail with court judgments, film matters, and food rations in the Reich. On the other hand, there is a consensus that neither the deportation nor the murder of the 5.8 million Jews whom Eichmann had included in his calculations for the 'final solution' would have been possible in the course of a ten-week campaign;<sup>130</sup> nor was there any attempt to implement such a plan during that period. At the end of the ten weeks, however, the 'final solution' did not move onto the agenda automatically because the war was not going according to plan; rather Hitler, the undisputed commander-in-chief, changed his strategy. With that change, all original planning for the 'final solution' fell by the wayside—in contrast to the production of tanks for the next campaign, neither gassing vans nor crematorium ovens had been manufactured in the expectation of a rapid end to the war—and a murder programme of unheard-of dimensions was set in motion.

Many of the functional reasons adduced from time to time as decisive for the onset of the 'final solution' overlook Hitler's role as commander-in-chief. The Holocaust was not set in motion because, say, the food supply situation did not permit any further provision for Jews, nor because the killing methods applied were making excessive physical and psychological demands on the murderers. The 'final solution' was brought forward to a specific point in the war only when the commander-in-chief so ordered. The Holocaust was not the by-product of a war plan that got out of control—a self-radicalizing development triggered by the sheer necessity of feeding the Wehrmacht and not overtaxing the murderers. Rather, the campaign against the Soviet Union turned into a war against the Jews—culminating in the Holocaust—at that point in time when the premisses that Hitler himself had set for realizing his prophecy could no longer be achieved and his power appeared to be under threat.

The specific measures taken against the Jews from September 1941 onwards were motivated by this fear of a threat to German rule from the imagined power of 'International Jewry'. With European 'Jewry' now schematized as a threat to the safety of the Reich and security behind the front lines, the orders regarding the 'final solution of the Jewish question' were to shoot Soviet Jews as partisans and deport the Jews of Europe 'from the west to the east',<sup>131</sup> i.e. in the course of a war that was sapping Germany's energy to organize convoys right across Europe, from a place where there was neither war nor a present threat to security but at most the illusion of another 'stab in the back'. Because

<sup>130</sup> Ereignismeldungen UdSSR (Occurrence Reports USSR) No. 31–50, BA R 58/215. The reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* have been published only in English translation, see *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, here Operational Situation Report USSR No. 31 (23 June 1941), 43.

<sup>131</sup> Order from Himmler to Greiser, BA NS 19/2655.

Hitler believed in mid-August 1941 'with almost uncanny certainty' that his prophecy would be fulfilled 'in the coming weeks or months',<sup>132</sup> the Jews of Europe were neither deported to 'reservations' where they could die out,<sup>133</sup> nor sterilized.<sup>134</sup> Instead, the 'annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'<sup>135</sup> was set in motion by his order.

(a) *Territorial Wars versus Race War in Hitler's Strategy*

The delimiting function of the war as a prior condition for National Socialist 'solutions' is explained by Hitler's world view, according to which there were two types of struggle: a struggle of nation states for *Lebensraum* and a (final) struggle of Aryans against Jews for world domination. For Hitler, the State represented 'not the content but a form',<sup>136</sup> only 'a means to an end',<sup>137</sup> the end being the preservation of a 'specific culture-bearing race', the Aryans. Thus the struggle of national states should be directed to securing *Lebensraum* for the 'culturally creative'—in this case, 'Aryan'—race.<sup>138</sup>

He described himself as a *Raumpolitiker*, a politician of space, not borders; one who would insist not on war for the regaining of minuscule bits of territory, but on wars for the conquest of enormous areas which would be settled by German farmers whose numerous offspring would both replace the casualties incurred in those wars and also provide the incentive as well as the means thereafter for making the additional conquests on which they would need to live. This process, as he explained to his secretary in 1927, would end only when one people, the racially best one—by which he meant the Germans—controlled the whole globe.<sup>139</sup>

For Hitler, however, the struggle for space was only the precondition for achieving the necessary power base for a 'final struggle' against the Jews. All the more so as 'the Jewish State, which should be the living organism for preserving and increasing a race, is completely unlimited as to territory',<sup>140</sup> and the potential enemy was thus dispersed over the whole world. 'Hence, too, the missionary vein: Hitler portrayed himself as the man with a task to perform "in the struggle to free the earth from Jewish tyranny". Another force would engage the worldwide enemy in a kind of holy war and "in a mighty struggle hurls the heaven-stormer back to Lucifer".'<sup>141</sup> Invoking 'the ultimate aims of the Jewish struggle, which are not exhausted in the mere economic conquest of the world but also demand its political subjugation',<sup>142</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Hitler to Goebbels, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 269 (19 Aug. 1942).

<sup>133</sup> On Heydrich's plans in this respect see Aly, *Final Solution*, 175–7.

<sup>134</sup> See Himmler's meetings with Brack, Clauberger, and Grawitz concerning these ideas on 15 Jan., 19 May, and 21 June 1941 (Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 108, 157, 177–8); also Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*.

<sup>135</sup> See Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, ii. 1058.

<sup>136</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 359.

<sup>138</sup> See Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie*, 61–3.

<sup>139</sup> Weinberg, 'Germany's War for World Conquest', 121.

<sup>140</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 274.

<sup>141</sup> Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 31, with quotes from Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, 644, and id., *Mein Kampf*, 605; see Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, 56.

<sup>142</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 291.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 357.

Hitler interpreted his own battle against the Jews as a fight to save the world, referring time and again to the ultimate destruction which 'the Jew' would wreak and to total victory over him as the only possible salvation. Hitler saw Jewish strivings as an all-embracing conspiracy running like a red thread through the whole of history. 'The Jew' was an ahistorical abstract principle of evil calling for an equally metahistorical, intrinsically unchangeable adversary—the Aryan<sup>143</sup>—and since the Jewish danger was supranational, the struggle against it must also be global and uncompromising.<sup>144</sup> Hitler saw this struggle as a mission: 'In defending myself against the Jew I am fighting for the work of the Lord.'<sup>145</sup>

From the summer of 1940, after the attempt at a racially based alliance with Britain had failed,<sup>146</sup> Hitler's strategy encompassed the possibility of conquering the nation states through a 'world blitzkrieg'. Meanwhile, certain aims of the 'final struggle' were to be pursued in advance through the 'ideological war for *Lebensraum*' against the Soviet Union. The purpose of the Russian campaign was not only to conquer an unchallenged power base in the whole of continental Europe but also to destroy Moscow as a headquarters of 'International Jewry', thereby forcing 'International Jewish Finance', which Hitler was firmly convinced had parasitically gained control of the levers of state power in Britain and the United States,<sup>147</sup> to come into the open and become visible as a supranational organization. Only this explains why Jews could be treated as hostages. Originally, after the conquest of power 'the Jews would be held as hostages until non-aggression pacts were concluded with foreign countries; in other words, until the international security of the new regime was assured'.<sup>148</sup> After conquering the '*Lebensraum* in the east', Hitler intended to use it as his operational base for the race war—the 'final struggle' of the supranational Aryans against the supranational Jews, when 'world Jewry' would be unable to find allies among the territorial states of Europe in the battle against the Greater German Reich.

In his famous prophecy of 30 January 1939, Hitler allowed for the possibility that 'International Jewish Finance', which for him was a real entity, might discern and thwart his plans. His genuine concern that the peoples of the earth could, through an alliance including America, frustrate his strategy of conquering one state after the other by superior force<sup>149</sup> was nevertheless rooted in the unrealistic belief that such a world coalition could only be brought about by 'International Jewish Finance'. His projection of 'International Jewry' as the driving force behind an anti-Hitler coalition was a revealing reflection of his own anti-Semitism, which allowed him to conceive of no greater enemy than the 'Jewish world conspiracy' he had undertaken to fight. From the outset,

<sup>143</sup> See Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, i. 100–1.

<sup>145</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 60.

<sup>146</sup> Hitler believed from the beginning that the outcome of his future efforts to achieve an alliance with Britain would depend on the struggle taking place in London between national and Jewish forces, Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 31.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>149</sup> Weinberg, 'Germany's War for World Conquest'; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 29.

he described the struggle as bloody: 'Today it is not princes and princes' mistresses who haggle and bargain over state borders; it is the inexorable Jew who struggles for his domination over the nations. No nation can remove this hand from its throat except by the sword. Only the assembled and concentrated might of a national passion rearing up in its strength can defy the international enslavement of peoples. Such a process is and remains a bloody one.'<sup>150</sup>

Thus Hitler was convinced that the 'solution of the Jewish question' could be undertaken only before or after the war for *Lebensraum*, otherwise territorial and race war would coincide. When he began the war in 1939 without having achieved the 'solution of the Jewish question' (conceived as the removal of the Jews from Europe with the aid of a European anti-Semitic coalition), his prophecy was intended to deter his greatest enemies from going to war against him. The 'solution of the Jewish question', as the 'final struggle', was postponed till after the territorial war. The beginning of the final struggle of Aryans against Jews would be brought forward and incorporated in that war only if Hitler found himself facing an enemy coalition. In such case the emphasis would shift from territorial war to final struggle: destruction of the Jews would take priority over the defeat of the territorial states of Europe, having now become a precondition of final victory.

In 1939 Hitler had put the war of territorial expansion before 'solution of the Jewish question'. In 1942 he believed he was engaged in the final struggle of the Aryan race against the Jews, which needed to be put forward and won by annihilating the Jews as a priority, before the conventional war against the other national states could be won in a second stage:

I have always been absolutely fair in my dealings with the Jews. On the eve of war, I gave them one final warning. I told them that, if they precipitated another war, they would not be spared and that I would exterminate the vermin throughout Europe, and this time once and for all.<sup>151</sup>

The Holocaust itself thus became a theatre of war against an imaginary enemy whom Hitler, unlike most Germans, considered the most dangerous. In retrospect too, the Führer saw this war as the decisive one:

National Socialism has tackled the Jewish problem by action and not by words. It has risen in opposition to the Jewish determination to dominate the world . . . it has flung them out of the positions they have usurped . . . Quick to realize the danger, the Jews decided to stake their all in the life and death struggle which they launched against us. National Socialism had to be destroyed, whatever the cost and even if the whole world were destroyed in the process. Never before has there been a war so typically and at the same time so exclusively Jewish.<sup>152</sup>

Hitler had expressed this conviction repeatedly during the war: 'We are clear in our minds that the war can end only in the extermination of the Aryan peoples or the disappearance of Jewry from Europe. I already declared before

<sup>150</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 595.

<sup>151</sup> Hitler, *Hitlers politisches Testament*, 69 (13 Feb. 1945).

<sup>152</sup> Hitler, *Hitlers politisches Testament*, 65 (3 Feb. 1945).

the German Reichstag on 1 September 1939 . . . that this war will not end as the Jews imagine it will, namely with the extermination of the European-Aryan peoples, but that the result of this war will be the annihilation of Jewry.<sup>153</sup>

At the end of his life, amidst the rubble-strewn wasteland of Europe, Hitler proclaimed victory in that struggle: 'From this point of view, National Socialism can justly claim the eternal gratitude of the people for the fact that I have eliminated the Jew from Germany and central Europe.'<sup>154</sup> For Hitler, the Holocaust had become the real war within the war.

A functional examination of the history of the Holocaust sheds further light on the interaction between prosecution of the war and the 'final solution'. In August 1941 Hitler announced that his prophecy was coming true; in October 1941 the first extermination facilities were under construction; and in November 1941 the plans for Operation REINHARD, the murder of all Jews living in the Government-General, were adopted. In December 1941 Hitler declared war on the United States and added, for the benefit of his associates, that the world war, whose logical outcome must be annihilation of the Jews, was now under way. In January 1942 the Wannsee Conference, which had had to be postponed, settled the bureaucratic arrangements for the extermination process that had already begun. Gassings had been carried out in Chelmno since December 1941. In the three Operation REINHARD camps—Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka—gassings began in the period March to July 1942, and industrial murder in Auschwitz and Majdanek started in the summer of 1942. With the war situation stagnating, the infrastructure for five operational murder centres—funded not from state budgets but secretly from resources taken from the victims—could not be set up more quickly. On 14 July 1942, when the military situation had improved and the Wehrmacht's summer offensive, Operation BLUE, had made more large territorial gains in the east, Hitler intervened in the race murder schedule by ordering the Reichsführer SS to complete the extermination of the whole Jewish population of the Government-General by 31 December 1942 so as to prevent another 'stab in the back' and permit resumption of the territorial war.<sup>155</sup> On 19 July 1942 Himmler dutifully passed Hitler's order on.<sup>156</sup> As a result, mass murder was speeded up to such an extent that Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka all terminated their ghastly activities in 1943 and were demolished. The documentation for Operation REINHARD was destroyed at the same time.<sup>157</sup> And by then the *Einsatzgruppen* had already murdered most of the Jews in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, ii. 1829.

<sup>154</sup> Hitler, *Hitlers politisches Testament*, 122 (2 Apr. 1945).

<sup>155</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 489 (14 July 1942); for details see 'Supplementary Note by the Defendants: 17 March 2000', Irving vs. Lipstadt, IfZ, Fg 70.

<sup>156</sup> Himmler to Krüger, 19 July 1942, BA NS 19/1757.

<sup>157</sup> 'In mid-March 1942 some 75 per cent to 80 per cent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while 20 per cent to 25 per cent had perished. A mere eleven months later, the percentages were exactly the reverse. At the core of the Holocaust was a short, intensive wave of mass murder,' Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. xv.

<sup>158</sup> *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion.*

TABLE I.D.II.I. *The extermination camps*

	Gassing method	First gassing	Termination
Chełmno	CO gassing vans	8 December 1941	Blown up at the end of March 1943
Bełżec	CO gas chambers	March 1942	Demolished in spring 1943
Sobibór	CO gas chambers	April 1942	Demolished after the uprising on 14 October 1943
Treblinka	CO gas chambers	23 July 1942	Demolished in November 1943
Auschwitz/ Birkenau	Zyklon B gas chambers	3 September 1941	Liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945
Majdanek	Zyklon B and CO gas chambers	20 July 1941	Liberated by the Red Army in July 1944

Source: *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*.

In this period the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played its part in the extermination of Jews from the states allied with the Reich. Hitler frequently appeared together with his foreign minister to compel the leader of another state to hand over his Jews, most of whom were transported directly to Auschwitz.<sup>159</sup> Contrary to Hitler's expectations, this supposed success—Himmler's Poznań speech of 1943, in which he called it a 'never-to-be-written page of glory', still rings in one's ears—did not turn the tide of war in Germany's favour. On 19 March 1944, with the military situation *bad*, Hitler invaded Hungary in another attempt to achieve victory via annihilation of the Jews. It was doomed to failure, since the premiss of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' was false from the outset. The Holocaust began in the war and was finished before the war ended; the role it played in Hitler's strategy, i.e. a 'final struggle' undertaken in advance, was as absurd as the idea of a final struggle itself.

(b) *The 1941 Dam Burst: Decisions from Above, Radicalization from Below*

How then did it come about that, during the war, extermination facilities were built, personnel were assigned to them, and the Jews of Europe were transported across the whole continent to be murdered? The blitzkrieg announced as a 'war of ideologies' against 'Judaean-Bolshevism' had doubtless aroused high expectations regarding the repeatedly postponed 'final solution'. For one thing, in the absence of any other attainable territory such as Madagascar or Palestine, and because of its designated purpose as the creation of *Lebensraum* for the German people, the prospect of territorial conquest in Russia had taken visions of a 'territorial final solution in the east' beyond the stage of pure

<sup>159</sup> *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, ii; Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office*; Jersak, 'A Matter of Foreign Policy'.



imagination even before the attack on the Soviet Union began. For another, it was confidently expected that the blitzkrieg would succeed and the Soviet Union, a 'giant with feet of clay', would collapse within weeks. It therefore appeared conceivable—at least to the racial planners and Heinrich Himmler—that, in accordance with various votes on 'plans for the final solution' after victory over France, the prosecution of the war and the 'final solution' could be separated from each other.<sup>160</sup> Himmler hoped that, while the Wehrmacht pursued the war against the British Empire in the Middle East from autumn 1941, he would be able to start building a racial empire in the east and, at the same time, begin the 'final solution of the Jewish question'.<sup>161</sup>

The campaign against the Soviet Union can for 1941 be divided into six stages of approximately four weeks' duration. They provide an excellent illustration of the prevailing priorities and thinking regarding conduct of the war and the 'final solution', since there were specific decisions to be taken at the end of each stage, as set out in Table I.D.II.2.

The first four-week period, ending on 22 July 1941, was characterized by unparalleled victory euphoria, which peaked at the meeting of 16 July 1941 and culminated in the orders issued the following day.<sup>162</sup> Hitler's conversation with the Croatian foreign minister, Marshal Slavko Kvaternik, on 22 July is still marked by that euphoria, which waned rapidly over the next four weeks.<sup>163</sup>

The next four weeks or so, up to 24 August 1941, saw growing uncertainty over the course of the war and the creeping spread of murder behind the eastern front. Then, between 15 and 24 August, Hitler initiated a fundamental change of strategy with the order to prepare the murder of the European Jews. The dam had burst.<sup>164</sup>

The following four-week period, ending on 23 September 1941, served to implement Hitler's order in various ways, including ordinances on the marking of Jews (1 September) and their deportation from the Reich (18 September).<sup>165</sup> In this respect, Hitler's meeting with Himmler and Heydrich on 23 September was particularly important.<sup>166</sup> During these four weeks the German army stood before Moscow, waiting for the implementation of Hitler's new strategy.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>160</sup> See pp. 296–7 above

<sup>161</sup> Jersak, 'Hitler and the Interaction', 261–6

<sup>162</sup> On the background to the meeting see Jäckel, 'Hitlers doppeltes Kernstück', 13–22; also Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*, 539–40; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 138–9; Aly and Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*, 243; Sandkühler, *Endlösung in Galizien*, 64–5; Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*, 311–13.

<sup>163</sup> Führer's conversation with Marshal Kvaternik in the presence of Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel on 22 July 1941 at Führer HQ, *DGFP*, D, xiii/2, 203–4 (app. 3).

<sup>164</sup> Jersak, 'Die Interaktion', 333–64.

<sup>165</sup> See Witte, 'Zwei Entscheidungen'.

<sup>166</sup> Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 141–3.

<sup>167</sup> Seaton, *The Battle for Moscow*, 75–7.



TABLE I.D.II.2. *Interaction between the course of the war and the 'final solution', 22 June to 21 December 1941*

Period	Course of the war	'Final solution'	Decision
22.6–22.7	Victory euphoria	Preparation of a territorial 'solution' for the post-war period	16.7. Hitler's orders on occupation rule in the east <sup>a</sup>
23.7–24.8	Growing uncertainty; change of military strategy; army halted outside Moscow on Hitler's order <sup>b</sup>	Spread of murder behind the front; transition to systematic mass murder of the Jews	15.8. Hitler's order to make preparations for the murder of the Jews <sup>c</sup> 24.8. Hitler's order to end euthanasia in the Reich <sup>d</sup>
25.8–23.9	Priority given to economic conduct of the war	Instructions and preparations for the murder of the European Jews	1.9. Police ordinance on the marking of Jews in the Reich by 15 Sept. 1941 <sup>e</sup> 16.9. Hitler's order to deport the Jews from the Reich <sup>f</sup>
24.9–19.10	Victory euphoria following reversal of Hitler's order to halt outside Moscow	Beginning of the construction of extermination facilities and the deportation of Jews from the Reich	2.10. Start of Moscow offensive <sup>g</sup> 15.10. Start of deportation <sup>h</sup>
20.10–16.11	Offensive bogged down in mud and snow	First large-scale slaughter; Goebbels's article in <i>Das Reich</i> <sup>i</sup>	13.11. OKH conference near Oršai
17.11–21.12	Military disaster; Soviet counter-offensive and Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor	Start of gassings in Chel'mno; postponement of Wannsee Conference (originally scheduled for 9 Dec.)	11.12. Declaration of war on the United States <sup>k</sup> 12.12. Order to murder the Jews <sup>l</sup> 19.12. Hitler appoints himself commander-in-chief of the army <sup>m</sup>

<sup>a</sup> On Hitler's conference on 16 July, 1941 see Bormann's file note, IMT, xxxviii. 86–91 and *DGFP*, D xiv, No. 1, 127–31. See also Göring's statement at Nuremberg trial, IMT, ix. 690–3 and the Großkopf memorandum of 6 Aug. 1941, *DGFP*, D xiii, No. 1, 240–1. Further details in Bräutigam, 'Aus dem Kriegstagebuch', 136 and Bräutigam, *So hat es sich zugetragen*, 330–43.

<sup>b</sup> WFS/L (I Op.), No. 441386/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., 15 Aug. 1941, BA-MA RW 4/v. 35.

<sup>c</sup> Telegram from Führer HQ to Heydrich, 15 Aug. 1941, note in PA Inland IIg, 177, 102; Heydrich to all *Einsatzgruppen* of the security police and SD, 15 Aug. 1941, CChIDK, 500/1/25.

<sup>d</sup> Statement by Viktor Brack, 12 Oct. 1946, ZSt, 'Euthanasie', Bra-Bz, NO-426, 6.

<sup>e</sup> Police ordinance of 1 Sept. 1941 on the marking of Jews, *RGBl.* I, 1941, 547.

<sup>f</sup> Himmler, together with Ambassador Abetz, was with Hitler on 16 Sept. 1941 when the deportation of the European Jews was discussed in detail (Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 211). Himmler's order to Greiser to begin the deportation, 18 Sept. 1941, BA, NS 19/2655, was a result of this conference. See IfZ, Fg 70.

<sup>g</sup> Hitler's appeal, 'Soldiers of the eastern front!', read out in the night of 1–2 Oct. 1941, repr. in *Der Völkischer Beobachter*, 10 Oct. 1941, BA-MA RH 20–9/22; it was preceded by the directive on the execution of operations, GenStdH Op.Abt. (I), No. 1494/41 g.Kdos.Chefs., 10 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 2/1326.

<sup>h</sup> The first Jewish transport, numbering 1,005 Jews, left Vienna on 15 Oct. 1941, after the Israelite Religious Community in Vienna had been informed by the RSHA of the imminent deportation on 30 Sept. 1941: Heydrich to Himmler, 19 Oct. 1941, Eichmann trial, Doc. 1544.

<sup>i</sup> Goebbels, 'Die Juden sind schuld!', 16 Nov. 1941, repr. in Goebbels, *Das eherne Herz*, 85–91.

<sup>j</sup> Halder, *KTB*, iii. 88 (13 Nov. 1941).

<sup>k</sup> Hitler's declaration of war in the Reichstag, 11 Dec. 1941, in *Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, cdlx. 93–106.

<sup>l</sup> Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord*, 117–36.

<sup>m</sup> *KTB OKW*, i. 1242.

The next four weeks, up to 19 October 1941, were marked by great military euphoria following Hitler's reversal of his decisions of 15 August 1941 and the start of the German army's attack on Moscow on 2 October. The euphoria reached a premature peak on 19 October with victory in the twin battles of Briansk and Vyazma.<sup>168</sup> At the same time, a start was made on construction of the first extermination facility in Belżec, and the deportation of German Jews to the east began on 15 October.<sup>169</sup>

The following four weeks up to 16 November 1941 saw the attempt to force victory in the east despite the onset of the muddy season, while construction of the extermination facilities in the east proceeded regardless. The attempt by the chief of the army general staff at a conference on 13 November to commit his subordinates to achieve victory at all costs by the end of the year in order to halt extermination of the Jews as far as possible led directly to military disaster for the army in the east.<sup>170</sup>

By 21 December 1941 the Soviet winter offensive had penetrated deep into the German positions. Meanwhile, Hitler's prophecy finally came true with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and his immediate declaration of war on the United States. The Wannsee Conference scheduled for 9 December 1941 was postponed<sup>171</sup> and, with the military situation looking hopeless, Hitler decided to pursue all options simultaneously: on 11 December he declared war on the United States,<sup>172</sup> on 12 December he announced unconditional

<sup>168</sup> Browning, 'Hitler and the Euphoria of Victory', 144–5.

<sup>169</sup> Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 129–30.

<sup>170</sup> BA-MA RH 21–2/v. 252; RH 21–2/932; RH 21–2/v. 244; RH 20–17/24. Ziemke, 'Franz Halder at Orsha'; Hartmann, *Halder*, 293–5.

<sup>171</sup> Margin notes on Heydrich's invitation to state secretary Luther, 29 Nov. 1941: 'State secretary is informed meeting postponed indefinitely R[ademacher] 8/12/[41]', PA, Inland IIg, 177; in the renewed invitations to Luther and Hofmann, 8 Jan. 1942, Heydrich speaks of the 'cancelled' conference, *ibid.* See also Büchler, 'A Preparatory Document'.

<sup>172</sup> Hitler's declaration of war in the Reichstag, repr. in Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1794–811 (not in English) For a summary of the problem see Wegner, 'Dezember 1941', 640–58.

extermination of the European Jews,<sup>173</sup> and on 19 December he took over supreme command of the German army bogged down in the east.<sup>174</sup>

What 'final solution' meant in practice was by no means clear in mid-August 1941. Banishing the Jews of Europe to a Siberian reservation or using their labour on the long road east to build the 'Germanic Reich of the German Nation' seemed equally conceivable. The idea of sterilizing all the European Jews as a prelude to either solution had gained considerable ground even before 22 June 1941.<sup>175</sup> Expectations of a lightning victory over the Soviet Union were linked with the expectation of the beginning of a 'territorial final solution' in the east, irrespective of whether the war (as a whole) were to last or not.

By mid-August 1941, with the hoped-for prospect of victory in the east before September, anti-Jewish operations were becoming more radical. In the last days of July, Hitler ordered the 2nd SS cavalry regiment to drive Jewish women 'into the swamp'<sup>176</sup>—thereby specifically extending the order to exterminate Jews beyond the mass shootings of Jewish men which the *Einsatzgruppen* had been carrying out since the start of the Russian campaign in state- or Party-controlled positions behind the front lines.<sup>177</sup> At the beginning of August the Reichsführer SS also stepped up the pressure on his units by demanding daily reports on their murder activities,<sup>178</sup> so that they too began to include Jewish women and children in their operations. Nevertheless, by mid-August 1941 only a few individual units had gone over to murdering Jews indiscriminately.<sup>179</sup>

In parallel with these operations behind the front, bureaucratic preparations were under way in anticipation of a rapid start to the 'final solution'. It is true that, before 15 August, Hitler had expressly forbidden Heydrich to deport Jews from the Old Reich 'during the war'.<sup>180</sup> The same applied to resettlement of ethnic Germans who, it was intended, would subsequently take the place of the deported Jews: 'The Führer has decided that the resettlement of ethnic Germans from southern Europe shall not take place *for the duration of the war*. It is envisaged that the ethnic Germans will be resettled after the war has ended.'<sup>181</sup> But this did not prevent the rival institutions, in the expectation of

<sup>173</sup> Gerlach, 'Die Wannsee-Konferenz', 25.

<sup>174</sup> KTB OKW, i. 1242. See background information in Fromm war diary fragment, NA, T 78, R 851.

<sup>175</sup> See Himmler's meetings with Brack, Clauberg, and Grawitz concerning these ideas on 15 Jan., 19 May, and 21 June 1941 (Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 108, 157, 177–8); also Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*.

<sup>176</sup> 'Explicit order from RF-SS. All Jews must be shot. Jewesses to be driven into the swamp,' Reitende Abteilung, SS-Kav.Rgt. 2, 1 Aug. 1941, BA F 6296.

<sup>177</sup> See Heydrich's order to *Einsatzgruppen* commanders (Chief of Security Police and SD, B. No. IV – 1100/41 geh.Rs.), 2 July 1941, repr. in Klein, *Einsatzgruppen*, 323–8.

<sup>178</sup> See Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 191 nn. 4–5.

<sup>179</sup> Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 639; Jersak, 'Hitler and the Interaction', 264–6.

<sup>180</sup> Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 303. The date can thus be established with certainty, since Eichmann reported Hitler's order at a propaganda ministry conference on 15 Aug. 1941.

<sup>181</sup> Minute, 2 Aug. 1941, *ADAP*, D, xiii/1, 245 (not in English). See also conference note signed by state undersecretary Luther, 24 July 1941, *DGFP*, 213–14 (emphasis added).

a swift victory, from starting to draw up concrete plans for the 'final solution'. To this end, Eichmann organized a conference at the RSHA on 13 August, which was attended by representatives of the Reich ministry of the interior, the Four-Year Plan and the Party chancellery. The RSHA had impressively demonstrated its overall responsibility for the 'final solution' by setting up a working party on the definition of 'Jews on a European scale'. It was the RSHA's declared aim to include 'half-Jews' and Jews in mixed marriages in the impending 'final solution', i.e. deportation from the German sphere of influence, but that necessitated overcoming the opposition of the interior ministry, which had so far refused to give its agreement.<sup>182</sup> The RSHA did not manage to do so, and attempts by the Party or the SS to hinder the state institutions in the exercise of their—however shaky—legal prerogatives were unsuccessful. However, the RSHA was by no means the only body that claimed competence with regard to the 'Jewish question'. Goebbels, as Gauleiter for Berlin, was quick to convene a conference on 15 August 1941 that was attended by Eichmann and some forty Party and state representatives. Leopold Gutterer, state secretary in the propaganda ministry, paid tribute to Goebbels by declaring that the soldiers at the front could not understand why Jews in the homeland were allowed so much freedom. As an emergency measure, he proposed that Jews unfit for work, whom 'it would be best to kill anyway', should be 'carted off to Russia'.<sup>183</sup> Gutterer also stressed that the marking of Jews, which Heydrich had been trying unsuccessfully to introduce ever since first proposing it at a conference following 'Kristallnacht' in November 1938,<sup>184</sup> was a necessary precondition for further measures. It had, however, been blocked by Hitler in person for almost three years.<sup>185</sup> Göring, who was in charge of the 'Jewish question', had followed Hitler's line and always come out strongly against such proposals at an early stage. Only a short while before, Eichmann now reported, another request had been addressed to the Reich marshal, who had once again turned it down. The RSHA accordingly intended to tackle the matter by getting Reichsleiter Martin Bormann to present its proposal to the Führer.<sup>186</sup> In the event, that proved no longer necessary.

The assessment of the war situation had changed dramatically in the meantime, and the high expectations were shattered. It is therefore quite conceivable that when Heydrich persuaded Göring to sign an authorization on 31 July 1941 to prepare the 'final solution', he succeeded only because the war was clearly not going to plan and the start of the 'final solution' was receding into

<sup>182</sup> Wilhelm Stuckart, state secretary in the interior ministry, had sent a counter-statement signed by Lösener direct to Heydrich, with copies to the Party chancellery and Lammers. The legal status of 'half-Jews' and Jews in mixed marriages remained inviolate with respect to the coming 'final solution', Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 297–8; Jersak, 'Die Interaktion'.

<sup>183</sup> Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 303.

<sup>184</sup> The minutes of the conference are repr. in IMT, xxviii, here 534.

<sup>185</sup> Hitler had expressed his rejection for the first time at a Gauleiter conference on 6 Dec. 1938, Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 302.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 303.

the far distance along with expectations of victory. The significance of the battle of Smolensk has been stressed in another context.<sup>187</sup> Against this background, Himmler's orders for more radical measures can be seen in a different light. They may have been issued during the euphoria phase in preparation for, and in the expectation of, an imminent start to the 'final solution'. But they could just as well have been given in a fatalistic mood, at the moment when it became apparent that hopes for the start of the 'final solution' were dwindling along with expectations of rapid victory in the east, and that the shadows of a long-lasting war might offer greater possibilities than the broad daylight of a swift peace. Such considerations also lay behind Himmler's order to investigate alternative killing methods, which was issued on 15 August 1941 during a tour of inspection in Minsk.<sup>188</sup>

Reassessment of the war situation brought Hitler into sharp conflict with his top generals over the further conduct of the campaign against the Soviet Union. Any discussion of the decision to annihilate the Jews that does not take account of the disputes about military strategy<sup>189</sup> distorts the historiographical perspective and divorces the decisive moment, i.e. the transfer of the 'final solution' to the war period, from the very war in the course of which the European Jews were murdered. Only against the background of Hitler's despotic, irrational strategic decisions on the further conduct of the war, which he imposed ruthlessly against the resistance of all his generals, do we see the more fundamental change of strategy that was the prime reason for annihilation.

The parameters of this key dispute can be briefly summarized. Up to mid-August 1941, Hitler and his generals jointly pursued a strategy of 'striking at the enemy's vital forces', on the assumption that after a large part of the Red Army had been destroyed near the front, the whole hinterland right up to the Urals could be occupied almost without a fight. Even after the eighth week of war, the generals wanted to keep to this strategy and expected Stalin to capitulate when Moscow fell—an expectation confirmed in retrospect by Soviet documents.<sup>190</sup> Hitler, however, suddenly believed that far-distant economic targets had to be attacked in order to sustain a protracted campaign. Here, two contradictory factors are particularly important. First, it was not military developments that shattered Hitler's belief in a short campaign: while the generals still maintained that victory in 1941 was possible, Hitler quickly abandoned that belief, although he had no other military information available. Second, quite uncharacteristically, Hitler himself shortly revised his decisions regarding the economic, longer-term conduct of the war, as if he had been woken by a nightmare. The problem was that, on that basis, he had already taken practical strategic decisions that had repercussions on the battlefield—and for the existence of the European Jews.

<sup>187</sup> Hillgruber, 'Die Bedeutung der Schlacht von Smolensk'.

<sup>188</sup> Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 181–2; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 571–3.

<sup>189</sup> For example Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*, 607–17.

<sup>190</sup> Andrew and Gordievsky, *Inside Story*, 346–7; Sudoplatov and Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks*, 145–8, 376–85, 397–401, 429; Overy, *Russia's War*, 96.

The nightmare that woke Hitler was the Atlantic Charter. He learnt of its contents on 14 August 1941, precisely between the two conferences at the RSHA and the propaganda ministry, while Himmler was in Minsk. Its sixth point,<sup>191</sup> which was never allowed to be published in the Third Reich because it clearly contrasted Hitler's 'struggle to free the earth from Jewish tyranny' with his own tyranny, convinced the dictator that he could no longer win the war in the way he had planned, by defeating one adversary after another and finally forming—by compulsion, if necessary—an alliance with Britain. The coming together of the British Empire and the United States could only raise the possibility of the world war that Hitler feared. In that eventuality, however, Hitler had announced the 'annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'.<sup>192</sup>

On 18 August 1941 Goebbels met with Hitler in his headquarters, where he found the dictator agitated and in poor health. Hitler spoke of the 'Jewish question': 'We discussed the Jewish problem. The Führer is convinced that the prophecy he once made in the Reichstag—that if Jewry again succeeded in provoking a world war, it would end with the annihilation of the Jews—is about to come true. It will be fulfilled in the coming weeks and months with almost uncanny certainty. The Jews in the east will have to pay the price. In Germany they have already paid in part and will have to pay even more in the future. North America is their last refuge. And there too they will have to pay sooner or later. Jewry is a foreign body among the culture-bearing nations . . .'<sup>193</sup>

The reference to Hitler's belief that his prophecy—and with it the outbreak of world war—would be fulfilled 'in the coming weeks and months with almost uncanny certainty' and would 'end with the annihilation of the Jews' is not as unsettling as some other views which Hitler confided to Goebbels: 'The Führer expressed the opinion that, in certain circumstances, peace might break out quite suddenly.'<sup>194</sup> While Hitler believed his prophecy was coming true, his ideology seemed to be wavering:

The Führer believes a moment may come when Stalin will sue for peace . . . When I asked him what he would do if that happened, the Führer replied that he would agree to peace . . . What then happened to Bolshevism would not matter to us. Bolshevism without the Red Army does not represent a threat.<sup>195</sup>

This war was Hitler's 'war of ideologies' against Bolshevism, his long-yearned-for struggle against Marxism. On his express, criminal orders, it was conducted as an ideological war of extermination. There had never been any talk of 'peace' or 'compromise'. For years Hitler had identified 'Judaebolshevism' as the source of all evil and preached its ruthless eradication.

<sup>191</sup> 'Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want,' CA, CHAR 20/48, Tudor No. 22 (emphasis added).

<sup>192</sup> Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, ii. 1449.

<sup>193</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 269 (19 Aug. 1941).

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 269.



Now, the war of ideologies and the struggle against Marxism were suddenly negotiable. Here we have Hitler remarking that Bolshevism represents no threat if the Red Army is destroyed. It was a reversal of all the claims that had culminated in the commissar order. From then on, the eradication of Bolshevism no longer seemed important, and Hitler did not utter a word about a link between Bolshevism and Jewry. Something as powerful as Hitler's ideological enemy seemed to have changed. The final struggle against 'International Jewish Finance' blotted out the struggle against 'Judaean-Bolshevism', which now appeared obsolete. This change was triggered by the Atlantic Charter. Its consequence was Hitler's order of 15 August 1941 to halt Army Group Central's advance on Moscow, which marked the beginning of his new strategy.

On the next two days Hitler received Himmler, who had just returned from Minsk.<sup>196</sup> Göring, who had been entrusted with the 'Jewish question' up to then, appeared at the Führer's headquarters on 19 August.<sup>197</sup> And on 20 August, Göring went to Himmler's headquarters, which he otherwise avoided, where they both had lunch with state secretary Friedrich Syrup from the Reich ministry of labour—after which the Reich marshal and the Reichsführer SS went for a walk. Himmler returned to Führer headquarters the same evening, presumably to report that matters regarding the 'final solution'—including the deployment of Jews as forced labour—had been rearranged. Incidentally, Himmler was so ill after the meeting with Göring that he could keep no appointments until 26 August,<sup>198</sup> and Göring suffered severe cardiac problems.<sup>199</sup> This was the context for Hitler's order to prepare the murder of the European Jews in accordance with his prophecy.

While Himmler was talking to Göring on 20 August, Hitler received SS-Sturmbannführer Wernher von Braun at Führer headquarters. Braun had come to present to Hitler what came to be known as the 'Vergeltungswaffe' (retaliation weapon, V-weapon) project. Funding for the project had been cut off a few weeks earlier, and the meeting with Hitler was Braun's last chance.<sup>200</sup> Flying bombs would never be used if the war was won in the near future. But Hitler was suddenly thinking on another scale, in anticipation of a much longer war:

The Führer stressed that this development was of revolutionary significance for the conduct of war throughout the world. Deployment of a few thousand rockets a year was therefore unwise. When it came to deployment, it would have to be possible to build and fire hundreds of thousands of rockets a year.<sup>201</sup>

The term 'retaliation weapon' may have been coined for the flying bomb that very afternoon, since, in the framework of the Jewish-led world war which

<sup>196</sup> See Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 197 (18 Aug. 1941); Breitman, *The Architect*, 198.

<sup>197</sup> Göring's meetings schedule, IfZ, ED 180a (19 Aug. 1941).

<sup>198</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 198 n. 23.

<sup>199</sup> Göring's meetings schedule, IfZ, ED 180a. (23–5 Aug. 1941).

<sup>200</sup> Hölsken, *Die V-Waffen*, 28–9.

<sup>201</sup> File note, 20 Aug. 1941, BA/MA, RH 8II/1211 and RH 8II/1208.



Hitler expected, retaliation could never be great enough. Be that as it may, Wernher von Braun left the Führer's headquarters with enough money to build whatever rocket weapons he wanted.<sup>202</sup>

That there had been movement on the 'Jewish question' at the very top was also clear the following day at the next scheduled conference on the subject.<sup>203</sup> Surprisingly, the Party chancellery representative reported that Martin Bormann had written to Heydrich informing him that 'the Führer has apparently decided that, with regard to the final solution of the Jewish question, half-Jews are also to be considered Jews as a matter of principle.'<sup>204</sup> This decision was so radical that Hitler later revoked it.<sup>205</sup> On the other hand, Hitler did not revoke his decision, which he had previously always refused to countenance, that Jews in the Reich be marked as such. Although Goebbels claimed credit for this success as Gauleiter for Berlin, it was nevertheless Hitler who changed his mind after 15 August 1941 and took a different decision.<sup>206</sup>

Himmler had already had a talk on 18 August 1941 with the SS chief medical officer, SS-Brigadeführer Ernst Robert Grawitz, who was also president of the German Red Cross.<sup>207</sup> That must have been the date 'in the summer of 1941' on which Himmler informed his chief medical officer that the Führer had ordered the extermination of the Jews and asked him how, in his opinion, mass extermination could best be carried out.<sup>208</sup> Grawitz recommended gas chambers.<sup>209</sup> Hitler took a further step on 24 August by officially terminating Operation T-4, the killing of people with 'lives unworthy of living', responsibility for which he had assigned in writing to Viktor Brack and Karl Brandt with retroactive effect from the beginning of the war against Poland.<sup>210</sup> Now that he had ordered preparations for the murder of the European Jews, Hitler could ill afford a public debate in the Reich about state killings, such as that provoked by the protests of the bishop of Münster, Clemens August von Galen, and the propaganda film *Ich klage an* (I accuse).<sup>211</sup> However, the real reason for stopping the euthanasia campaign seems to have been a different one: up to that point in time, over 33,000 of the 70,273 people put to death by Operation T-4 murder specialists had been gassed,<sup>212</sup> and the experience of the gassing experts was now needed for a greater task.

<sup>202</sup> Hölsken, *Die V-Waffen*, 29.

<sup>203</sup> Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 306.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Adam, *Judenpolitik*, 319–20. Himmler's original order to Rudolf Höß, the commandant of Auschwitz, was also altered subsequently: Höß relates that 'When the RFSS's original order of 1941 that all Jews were to be exterminated without exception was amended to stipulate that those fit for work were to be used in the armament industry, the Auschwitz Jewish camp became a Jewish assembly camp on an unprecedented scale,' Höß, *Commandant of Auschwitz*.

<sup>206</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 265–6 (19 Aug. 1941).

<sup>207</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 197 (18 Aug. 1941). On Grawitz himself see Biege, *Helfer unter Hitler*, 143–58.

<sup>208</sup> Breitman, *The Architect*, 198.

<sup>209</sup> Sworn statement by Dr Konrad Morgens, 13 July 1946, quoted in Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, iii. 873. On Morgens's credibility and knowledge of the facts, see *ibid.* 872 n. 19.

<sup>210</sup> IMT, xxvi. 169.

<sup>211</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 239 (15 Aug. 1941).

<sup>212</sup> Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 160.

Why did the 'final solution' not begin in the manner envisaged by Himmler's and Heydrich's planners? Why was there no attempt to sterilize the European Jews and thus preserve their labour potential? Since the war required huge resources, why begin by deporting Jews from west to east rather than by killings in the vicinity of the extermination centres? Why did Hitler block every initiative of his otherwise so greatly appreciated collaborators until 15 August or, looking at it another way, why did every single initiative on the 'Jewish question', with the exception of Alfred Rosenberg's, succeed from that point on?

Holocaust research has so far failed to explain why the existing plans for a 'territorial final solution' remained in the drawer after 15 August 1941. In the last resort, such feeble explanations as the bloodlust of individual local commanders, the food supply situation, and the continuation of the war have been offered.<sup>213</sup> If, however, ideological reasons had not played the main part in the murder of the European Jews, it would be quite impossible to explain why Jews were exterminated as partisans or other dangerous elements instead of being used—after sterilization—as an urgently needed workforce during the war. It might perhaps just be possible to explain the fate of the Soviet Jews on such grounds, but certainly not to provide a convincing reason why Jewish people were deliberately transported eastwards from western Europe, a region with a manpower shortage, to the vicinity of the war theatre and, as soon as deportations from the Reich began, Soviet prisoners of war were transported in the opposite direction to replace Jewish labour in the west. Without reference to the decisive racial ideology motives, it is even more difficult to explain either the basis for the two decisions—the one to deport Jews from the Reich and the other to deploy Soviet 'subhumans' in the Reich—or the concurrent execution of measures coordinated at the highest level.

And there we have our explanation. The only reason why the 'final solution' did not take the form of deployment of sterilized Jews as forced labour en route for a reservation in the east was that the Jews suddenly appeared to the German dictator as a threat and as responsible for both the duration of hostilities and the inevitability of a world war. They had therefore to be annihilated in accordance with his prophecy. In the midst of the confusion of responsibilities among the racial planners awaiting the end of the war, the 'final solution' under preparation suddenly took on a clear, unambiguous direction—an alternative direction, in fact—towards the content Hitler had assigned to it in his prophecy: systematic murder of the European Jews. Hitler gave the order to make the necessary preparations to Himmler after the Reichsführer SS returned from Minsk. Himmler, who was by no means taken by surprise, later described the order as 'the most horrifying task and the most horrifying order that an organization could be given: the order to solve the Jewish question.'<sup>214</sup>

<sup>213</sup> See, for example, the contributions in Herbert, 'Vernichtungspolitik'.

<sup>214</sup> Himmler's speech to generals at Sonthofen on 21 June 1944, repr. in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 203–5, here 203.

Hitler's order was like the bursting of a dam. Preparations now began for a comprehensive programme of annihilation aimed at all European Jews. Mommsen's phrase 'Realisierung des Utopischen' (the realization of utopia)<sup>215</sup> takes on a whole new resonance in this context, together with the question of 'how ideology became reality'.<sup>216</sup> Hitler's order to prepare the murder of the European Jews coincided with Himmler's order to look for new killing methods. At the same time, all *Einsatzgruppen* and SS units behind the front lines extended their shooting operations after 15 August 1941 to include Jewish women and children, so that the numbers of murdered Jews leapt.<sup>217</sup> A first 'test gassing'—a hideous 'unword', since it was meaning actual mass murder—took place in Auschwitz on 3 September 1941 as part of the investigation of new murder methods. Adolf Eichmann<sup>218</sup> and Rudolf Höß<sup>219</sup> reported that a Führer order for the murder of the European Jews had been conveyed to them by their respective superiors, Heydrich and Himmler, in autumn 1941.<sup>220</sup> Eichmann added that 'Globocnigg(?) [*sic!*] has been instructed by the Reichsführer to use anti-tank trenches for the purpose.'<sup>221</sup> In fact, Globocnik began the systematic murder of the Jews in Lublin in September and October 1941 with extraordinary zeal.<sup>222</sup>

But he was not alone in his efforts to exploit the movement on the 'Jewish question'. The Hamburg Gauleiter, Karl Kaufmann, used the Gauleiters' direct access to the Führer to suggest to Hitler that the Jews of Hamburg be deported so as to free accommodation for bombed-out families. 'The Führer', he wrote to Göring, 'immediately granted my request and issued relevant orders for deportation of the Jews.'<sup>223</sup> In September 1941 Otto Bräutigam, head of the general policy department in the ministry for the occupied eastern territories, brought Hitler a proposal from Rosenberg to deport Jews in retaliation for the deportation of Volga Germans. He was received with interest by Hitler's chief adjutant, Col. Rudolf Schmundt: 'To my great surprise he immediately asked for the memorandum, which he said was a very important and urgent document that greatly interested the Führer.'<sup>224</sup> On 16 September

<sup>215</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Realisierung des Utopischen'.

<sup>216</sup> Broszat, 'Hitler und die Genesis der Endlösung', 746.

<sup>217</sup> Browning, 'Hitler and the Euphoria of Victory', 138; Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 95–109.

<sup>218</sup> Eichmann, *Memoiren*, 171–2.

<sup>219</sup> IMT, xi. 438–66, here 440. Similarly in Höß, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, 148, 188.

<sup>220</sup> Himmler did not note a meeting with Höß in his meetings schedule, which suggests that basic orders and decisions concerning the murder of the European Jews were not to be reflected therein. Höß facilitates the dating by mentioning that he was summoned to Berlin. During the war Himmler usually remained at his headquarters, and in the summer of 1941 he was in Berlin, according to his service diary, only on 14 July, 4 Aug., and 9–10 Sept. It may therefore be assumed that Höß received the order from Himmler on 9–10 Sept. 1941 and was able to report to him at the same time on the 'test gassing' that had taken place a few days earlier. Karin Orth's arguments are valid irrespective of dating issues, Orth, 'Rudolf Höß'.

<sup>221</sup> Eichmann, *Memoiren*, 171–2.

<sup>222</sup> Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung*, 193–214.

<sup>223</sup> Kaufmann to Göring, 4 Sept. 1942, quoted in Bajohr, 'Gauleiter in Hamburg', 291. The original was discovered by Peter Witte in the Secret Prussian State Archives in Berlin: I HA, Rep. 90, App. Q, Handakten Görnert.

<sup>224</sup> Bräutigam, 'Aus dem Kriegstagebuch', 144–5.

Otto Abetz, who had come from Paris for a meeting with Himmler, also found himself knocking on open doors with his proposals for deportation of the Jews. He was received not only by Himmler but by Hitler himself.<sup>225</sup> After Hitler's fundamental decision it seems no longer to have been difficult to present proposals regarding the 'Jewish question'. Four weeks earlier the situation had been quite different. Heydrich's suggestions for the marking of Jews were not even read by Hitler, and his request for Jews to be deported from the Reich during the war met with a flat refusal.<sup>226</sup> Initiatives from below had a chance of success only if they coincided with policy at the top. Thus, in mid-September 1941, SS-Sturmabführer Karl-Theodor Zeitschel, Jewish affairs specialist at the German embassy in Paris, had no problems at all in obtaining an assurance from the highest authority that Jews detained in French concentration camps would be deported immediately.<sup>227</sup> Jews from France were not the only ones that were now to be deported during the war.<sup>228</sup> Hitler's decision on this point was another milestone on the road to preparation of the murder of the European Jews, and specifically cleared the way for its implementation in the course of the war.<sup>229</sup> In a letter dated 18 September 1941, Himmler informed Arthur Greiser, Gauleiter of the Warthegau, that 'the Führer wants the *Altreich* and the Protectorate emptied and cleared of Jews from west to east as soon as possible'.<sup>230</sup>

It is clear from developments in the autumn of 1941 that the 'final solution' as we understand it in retrospect, i.e. the systematic murder of the European Jews, did not originate in a single decision or a single order.<sup>231</sup> On 15 August 1941, under the impact of the Atlantic Charter and in expectation of a world war, Hitler gave the order to begin preparations for the murder of the European Jews. In so doing, he specified neither methods nor a time frame. Preparations for a 'final solution of the Jewish question' had progressed considerably even before the war, and definition of the objective as 'systematic murder' now determined their further direction. It is too seldom appreciated that at no point after August 1941 did the term 'final solution' mean anything other than 'mass murder', although it had possessed a wide spectrum of meaning only shortly before. Definition of the objective came from none other than Hitler himself and ran far ahead of the subsequent initiatives of his subordinates, who acted henceforth within the newly established framework.

Several of the men entrusted with extermination of the Jews met at Himmler's headquarters from 22 to 24 September 1941. In the context of that meeting, Hitler promoted Heydrich exceptionally to SS-Obergruppenführer

<sup>225</sup> Hitler's statements to Ambassador Abetz on 16 Sept. 1941, repr. in *DGFP*, D, xiii/2. 518.

<sup>226</sup> Hitler's general instruction to Heydrich not to deport the Jews during the war was not issued sometime in mid-August, as Longerich assumes (Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 438), but was reported by Eichmann on 15 Aug. 1941 (Lösener, 'Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium', 303). It reflected Hitler's policy on the 'Jewish question' from 22 June to 15 Aug. 1941.

<sup>227</sup> Witte, 'Zwei Entscheidungen', 47–8.

<sup>228</sup> See Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz*.

<sup>229</sup> Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*, 616.

<sup>230</sup> Reichsführer SS, Tgb.No. A/29/59/41, 18 Sept. 1941, BA NS 19/2655. Copies were sent to Heydrich, Koppe, and Wolff, repr. in *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden*, 157 (emphasis added).

<sup>231</sup> See Browning, *Nazi Policy*, 28.

and general of police.<sup>232</sup> Several historians have assumed that the subject of the meeting was a Führer order, and Hitler may well have issued specific instructions on further action regarding the 'final solution'.<sup>233</sup> The beginning of the deportations, the construction of the first extermination facilities, and the prohibition on Jewish emigration in October 1941, finally ruled out any possibility of return to a civilized future. The preparations for Operation REINHARD—the campaign of mass murder in the extermination camps of Belżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, named in honour of Reinhard Heydrich after his assassination—and the invitation to the Wannsee Conference in November 1941<sup>234</sup> showed the intended direction. Hitler himself again made it clear in the form of orders to the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters in December, following his declaration of war on the United States.<sup>235</sup> Invoking his prophecy, he proclaimed that, with the onset of a world war, the annihilation of the European Jews would now become a reality. In Goebbels's words:

He had prophesied to the Jews that, if they again brought about a world war, it would result in their annihilation. Those were not empty words. The world war is here, the annihilation of the Jews must be the necessary result. This question is to be regarded without sentimentality. We are not here to have sympathy with the Jews, but rather with our German people. If the German people have again sacrificed 160,000 dead in the eastern campaign, the authors of this bloody conflict will have to pay for it with their lives.<sup>236</sup>

Four days later, Governor-General Frank explained the meaning of Hitler's orders to his subordinates:

One way or another—I tell you this quite openly—we must finish off the Jews . . . We cannot shoot these 3.5 million Jews, we cannot poison them, but we will be able to take action that will lead somehow to successful destruction; and this in connection with the large-scale measures which are to be discussed in the Reich.<sup>237</sup>

Frank did not forget to mention the significance of the annihilation of the Jews for the war itself: 'if the Jewish rabble in Europe were to survive the war while we sacrifice the best of our blood for the preservation of Europe, then this war would be only a partial success.'<sup>238</sup>

#### 4. THROUGH EXTERMINATION TO 'FINAL VICTORY'

##### (a) *The Function of the Extermination of Jews during the War*

Were one to ask him (the Führer) how and when the end of the war can be brought about, he would reply that this is the only question which, throughout history, no statesmen or commander-in-chief has ever been able to answer precisely. In this connection the Führer cited the Punic Wars, the Thirty Years War, and the Seven Years

<sup>232</sup> For details see Jäckel, *Hitlers Herrschaft*, 116–17.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.; Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, 129.

<sup>235</sup> For a detailed account see Gerlach, 'Die Wannsee-Konferenz'.

<sup>236</sup> Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ii. 498–9 (13 Dec. 1941).

<sup>237</sup> Frank, *Das Diensttagebuch*, 457–8 (16 Dec. 1941).

<sup>234</sup> Büchler, 'A Preparatory Document'.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

War as examples. At no point in time would the statesmen or military leaders involved in these conflicts have been able to say anything definite about the end of the war, but they still achieved victory in the end. In a large-scale conflict like the present world war, all that matters is never to lose sight of the goal, to recognize clearly the preconditions for achieving that goal, and to ensure that those conditions are met.<sup>239</sup>

Fate has decided that the total solution of the Jewish question is a task for the twentieth century to accomplish. In a proclamation read out on 24 February 1942, the Führer of the German People informed the peoples of Europe, and through them all non-Jewish mankind, how this solution will come about: 'Today the ideas of our National Socialist and the fascist revolution have conquered great and powerful states, and my prophecy—that this war will bring about not the annihilation of Aryan mankind but the extermination of the Jew—will be fulfilled. Whatever the struggle may bring with it or however long it may last, this will be its final result. And only then, with the removal of these parasites, will a long period of understanding between nations, and with it true peace, come upon the suffering world.'<sup>240</sup>

When the United States made it clear in August 1941 that they might enter the war on Britain's side in order to end the Nazi tyranny, and Hitler became convinced that world war was inevitable, the postponed 'final solution' wholly lost its function as a deterrent. What is more, Hitler's prophecy of 30 January 1939 came true overnight—if only to the extent that he himself believed 'International Jewry' would lead America and Britain side by side in a war against him. In December 1941 he hastened to turn that prophecy into a reality for all to see by declaring war on the United States.

With that, racial and territorial war prematurely exchanged roles in Hitler's eyes. The 'final solution' was no longer to be achieved through 'final victory': instead, 'final victory' was to be achieved through the 'final solution'. 'Final solution during the war' replaced 'final solution after the war' as the new strategy that led to Auschwitz<sup>241</sup> and the mass gassings of Operation REINHARD. The murder of the last Jew on European soil would break the 'subversive power' of 'International Jewry', which in Hitler's view had caused Germany's defeat in 1918 and sent the superior German forces home undefeated in the field. The 'annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'<sup>242</sup> was the precondition for victory in the territorial war, even if that conflict turned into a repeat of the Thirty Years or Hundred Years War. Hitler never tired of repeating that there would not be another 1918 under his leadership.<sup>243</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Hitler to Antonescu on 10 Jan. 1943, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, ii. 206–7.

<sup>240</sup> 'Das kommende Ende—des Führers Prophezeiung', in *Der Stürmer*, 19 Mar. 1942. On Hitler's message to the 'veterans', see Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1844.

<sup>241</sup> Schulte, 'Vom Arbeits- zum Vernichtungslager'; Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*.

<sup>242</sup> Domarus, *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, ii. 1449.

<sup>243</sup> 'However long this war may last, Germany will never surrender. Never will we repeat the mistake we made in 1918 by laying down arms at a quarter to twelve. One thing is sure: the last to lay down arms will be Germany, at five minutes past twelve', from Hitler's speech to 'veterans' on 8–9 Nov. 1943, Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2056 (not in English).



The pronouncements of Hitler the commander-in-chief merged once again with those of Hitler the would-be politician of *Mein Kampf*. By 1942 at the latest, racial war and territorial war—once formulated as utopian concepts for world domination during imprisonment at Landsberg and the following year—had coalesced into realpolitik.

Since politics now meant extermination, and one could conceivably speak of a 'politics of extermination',<sup>244</sup> it would be possible to maintain the two-part division of Hitler's strategy into 'politics and conduct of the war'<sup>245</sup> for the years 1942-5 as well. Nevertheless, the decision to exterminate the European Jews seems to have marked the end of politics as such, as if an irrational ideological component had not only gained the upper hand but had effectively replaced it.<sup>246</sup> Decisions on the life or death of millions of human beings were based on Hitler's fear of a Jewish world conspiracy, as expressed in his prophecy—and in wartime even more on his fear of internal subversion, of a second Jewish remote-controlled 'stab in the back'—that could render the military efforts of the dictator and his willing armed forces useless. Hitler was the victim of his own irrational conviction that, with the extermination of the last Jew in Europe, the conspiracy would end, luck would turn, the war would be won, the world enemy would be defeated, and world domination would follow, ushering in the end of history and the 'Thousand-Year Reich'.

For that reason any further talk of politics is out of the question. Nor can we any longer speak of the conduct of war as such: with the decision to exterminate the European Jews, the war became at times merely an instrument to conceal widespread industrial mass murder. 'Strictly speaking, Hitler never returned to politics,' and a convincing case can be made that 'from then on, Hitler's whole conduct of the war was directed mainly at gaining time for his extermination mission'.<sup>247</sup> Henceforth the relationship between war and extermination of the Jews was reversed in Hitler's strategy.<sup>248</sup> Having ceased to function as a threat, extermination of the Jews now became the precondition for 'final victory', since it would stabilize the home front. Now was the time for what Hitler had described in *Mein Kampf* as the duty of a prudent state leadership in the event of a world war:

Now that the German worker had rediscovered the road to nationhood, it ought to have been the duty of any government which had the care of the people in its keeping, to take this opportunity of mercilessly rooting out everything that was opposed to the national spirit. While the flower of the nation's manhood was dying at the front,

<sup>244</sup> Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*.

<sup>245</sup> A division still made by Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*.

<sup>246</sup> 'As Ribbentrop rightly remarked, Hitler probably no longer understood reason and possibility in politics; for him there was only "victory or downfall" . . .', Fest, *Hitler*, 949 (not in English).

<sup>247</sup> Fest, 'Hitlers Krieg', 370, 372.

<sup>248</sup> 'One sometimes gets the impression that the Wehrmacht's military defeats corresponded to Hitler's racial "victories",' Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich*, 758.



there was time enough at home at least to exterminate this vermin.<sup>249</sup> He expanded on this theme elsewhere:

When the nations on this planet fight for existence—when the question of destiny, ‘to be or not to be’, cries out for a solution—then all considerations of humanitarianism or aesthetics crumble into nothingness; for all these concepts do not float about in the ether, they arise from man’s imagination and are bound up with man . . . but all such concepts become secondary when a nation is fighting for its existence; in fact they become totally irrelevant to the forms of the struggle as soon as a situation arises where they might paralyse a struggling nation’s power of self-preservation . . . the most cruel weapons were humane if they brought about a quicker victory.<sup>250</sup>

This answers the question of why the war continued after Stalingrad, and why Germany had to be conquered down to the last inch of territory before it could be liberated.

(b) *Conduct of the War and Extermination of the Jews in Parallel*

In autumn 1941, as long as the United States had not entered the war, Hitler still vacillated. While still hoping for Japanese intervention<sup>251</sup> in the war against the Soviet Union, he was already having the extermination camps built. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 the fronts became clear. Immediately afterwards Hitler himself declared war on the United States, confirmed to the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters the next day his decision<sup>252</sup> to exterminate the Jews, and took supreme command of the German army stuck outside Moscow.<sup>253</sup> When the conflict became a world war at the turn of 1941/2, Hitler’s strategy had changed radically. Continuity of personnel ended. Hitler replaced the commanders-in-chief of all three army groups in the east, after Himmler had gone to see them at their HQs and probably left them in no doubt about the (new) extermination strategy.<sup>254</sup> From then on, Hitler led the army according to the racial criterion of

<sup>249</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 155. See Hitler’s speech to the ‘veterans’ on 8–9 Nov. 1943: ‘What happened in 1918 will not happen in Germany again. At a time when such great sacrifices are demanded of hundreds of thousands of our bravest soldiers, we shall not shrink from bringing to reason people who are not prepared to make those sacrifices. When tens of thousands of our best men, our dearest fellow Germans, are falling at the front, we shall surely not shrink from putting to death a few hundred criminals at home,’ Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2056.

<sup>250</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 162–3; see also Jäckel, *Hitler’s Weltanschauung*, 59–60.

<sup>251</sup> See Whyman, *Stalin’s Spy*.

<sup>252</sup> Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord*, 117–36.

<sup>253</sup> KTB OKW, i. 1242 (19 Dec. 1941).

<sup>254</sup> Himmler went to see Field Marshal Leeb, C-i-C. Army Group North, on 3 Jan. 1942, nine days before Leeb asked to be relieved of his command (Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 308), Field Marshal Bock, C-i-C. Army Group Centre, on 24 Oct. 1941 (*ibid.* 245), and Field Marshal Reichenau, then C-i-C. Sixth Army and subsequently C-i-C. Army Group South, on 4 Oct. 1941. These visits took place before Reichenau’s infamous order of 10 Oct. 1941 on the conduct of the troops in the eastern territories (*ibid.* 225), and after his appointment as C-i-C. Army Group South, on 23 Dec. and 27–8 Dec. 1941. Himmler also spoke to Reichenau by telephone on 11 and 12 Jan. 1942 (*ibid.* 298–9, 313–14). It is proven that Himmler spoke with Bock in the presence of Bach-Zelewski and Schenkendorff explicitly about extermination of the Jews (*ibid.* 245 n. 77). He is highly likely to have done so in the case of Reichenau, since on 27 Dec. 1941 HSSPF Prützmann was also present. In Leeb’s case, however, one can only speculate.

the survival of the fittest rather than strategic considerations. When 100,000 German troops were encircled near Demyansk in the spring of 1942, Hitler's reaction from his headquarters was cool and dismissive: German superiority would inevitably prove itself—or the troops would perish. When the first airlift in history was established to Demyansk and the 100,000 men were relieved after two-and-a-half months, this served Hitler as a paradigm for German superiority and endurance which he then applied so fatalistically at Stalingrad.<sup>255</sup> At the beginning of 1942, however, there was as yet no hint of Stalingrad. In spring 1942 all Hitler's efforts were directed at conquering Russian raw materials, above all the oil of the Caucasus, in order to render 'Fortress Europe' entirely blockade-proof before the western Allies were in a position to launch an invasion. Hitler still believed he would be able to defeat the Soviet Union alone at any time. Accordingly, there were no more attempts in 1942 even to attack Moscow.<sup>256</sup>

The war would now last longer. At conferences in December 1941 Hitler himself spoke of the conduct of operations in 1943(!) as part of the continuing Russian campaign.<sup>257</sup> Similarly, in a conversation with Romania's Marshal Ion Antonescu in February 1942, he invoked the following winter's operations in the eastern campaign.<sup>258</sup> Oil supply plans drawn up in 1942<sup>259</sup> listed the requirement for full-scale military operations on the eastern front in 1945. Meanwhile, foreign minister Ribbentrop was talking about another Thirty Years War. At the beginning of January 1942 none other than Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, who was then engaged on work for the army ordnance office, proposed that, in view of Germany's critical situation, uranium be used as a decisive means of winning the war.<sup>260</sup>

Industrial extermination of the Jews began in the spring on the fringes of the Reich and the Government-General. The Wannsee Conference in January 1942 had established the preconditions for deporting all European Jews within reach as quickly as possible to ghettos in the east or directly to extermination camps.<sup>261</sup>

Strategic planning was geared to creating the economic and ideological preconditions for attacking the enemy coalition with new weapons from the summer of 1943, and ultimately with 'the Führer's miracle weapons'. While oilfields were being conquered, new weapons developed, and arms manufacture stepped up under Albert Speer, Reich minister for armament and war production, Operation REINHARD was to be completed in 1942 so that the war could then be pursued to 'final victory'. In Hitler's eyes, extermination of the Jews was the precondition for victory.

<sup>255</sup> Hillgruber, 'Das Kriegsjahr 1942', 42–3.

<sup>256</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vi, 861–3.

<sup>257</sup> Fromm war diary fragment, NA, T 78, R 851 (23 Dec. 1941).

<sup>258</sup> Hitler to Antonescu on 11 Feb. 1942, in *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, ii, 46.

<sup>259</sup> BA-MA RW 19/2815.

<sup>260</sup> Fromm war diary fragment, NA, T 78, R 851 (9 Jan. 1942).

<sup>261</sup> See Longerich, *The Wannsee Conference*; Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting*; Gerlach, 'Die Wannsee-Konferenz'; Jäckel, 'On the Purpose of the Wannsee Conference'.

Operation BLUE, aimed at conquering the Soviet raw materials sources in the Caucasus, was launched on 28 June 1942.<sup>262</sup> However, when the German army achieved its first territorial aims unexpectedly quickly, Hitler again changed his military strategy.<sup>263</sup> He decided to split the large wedge-shaped attacking force designed to conquer the oilfields into two halves. One half was to strike off in a north-easterly direction towards Stalingrad and close the Volga to the transport of raw materials to Siberia, while the other conquered the oil wells in the Caucasus on which survival depended. In his hubris Hitler believed he could achieve both aims simultaneously. The end result was that both moves failed, leaving Hitler's military strategy in tatters. The role of extermination of the Jews in this strategy becomes clear in retrospect, when we see what orders Hitler, in his euphoria, gave the Reichsführer SS in the summer of 1942. In July, when he already believed Stalingrad was about to fall and victory was near, he demanded that Himmler further accelerate extermination of the Jews. On 19 July 1942 Himmler ordered that extermination of the whole Jewish population in the Government-General be completed by 31 December 1942.<sup>264</sup> 'These measures', Himmler wrote, 'are essential for accomplishing the required ethnic segregation of races in accordance with the pending New Order of Europe, but also with a view to the security and integrity of the German Reich and its spheres of interest. Any violation of this rule endangers peace and order in the entire territory that is of interest to Germany . . . For all these reasons a complete clearing-up process is necessary and must be carried through.'<sup>265</sup>

In fact, Hitler seems to have planned to resume the military offensive in mid-1943 after the Jews had been exterminated. As early as the winter of 1941/2, weapons development and troop training focused on July 1943 as the point in time when the territorial war could be victoriously concluded. However, the battle of Kursk in July 1943, a turning point in Hitler's conduct of the war in the east, was circumstantial rather than part of a long-term plan. For the first time the new weapons and troops were deployed that were supposed to change the course of the war on the battlefield.<sup>266</sup> At the same time, Hitler was informed of success in the 'racial war': the Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka extermination camps all ended their horrific activities in 1943 and were demolished, blown up, and levelled off. The corpses were dug up and burned, the ashes dispersed, and the sites grassed over and planted with flowers. The murderers recorded their deeds meticulously in final reports and statistics.<sup>267</sup> Close on 2 million people, most of them Polish Jews, were murdered

<sup>262</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 958.

<sup>263</sup> Führer order of 13 July 1942 *re* continuation of the operations of Army Groups A and B, repr. in KTB OKW, ii. 1281–2. See *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 978.

<sup>264</sup> Himmler to Krüger, 19 July 1942, BA NS 19/1757, repr. in *Topography of Terror*, 135–6.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.* 135–6.

<sup>266</sup> Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich*, 781–2; Klink, *Das Gesetz des Handelns*.

<sup>267</sup> See Globocnik's final report 'on the administrative completion of Operation Reinhard', March–November 1943, BA NS 19/2234.

in these four camps alone. Millions more were shot by the *Einsatzgruppen* or gassed in Auschwitz and Majdanek, the last of them—several hundred thousand Hungarian Jews—in 1944, at a time when the war was obviously lost. Successes in the 'racial war' were all that remained for the German dictator to celebrate: the German troops were beaten on the battlefield.

Would things have gone otherwise, i.e. better for the Jews, if America had 'kept out of it' and Hitler had won the war with the Soviet Union? On 22 July 1941, when he assumed he had already won the war in the east, Hitler told Croatia's foreign minister it was all the same to him where the Jews were deported, to Madagascar or Siberia.<sup>268</sup> At that time, neither gassing nor extermination camps figured in Nazi plans for the Jews. Reinhard Heydrich had already targeted the Soviet labour camps on the Arctic coast as the place to which Jews in the German sphere of influence could be deported<sup>269</sup>—to die, not to live. Meanwhile Hitler had drawn the German–Japanese border on his globe at the Urals<sup>270</sup> and—like his great model Gen. Erich von Ludendorff in the First World War—still saw the conquered territories only as a 'troop deployment area for the next war'. He was already preparing for future wars.<sup>271</sup> He still wanted to bring Britain over to his side, by force if necessary, divide the world between them, embark together on the 'final struggle' of the Aryans against the Jews, and fight with the British navy not only against the United States<sup>272</sup> but probably also against his former ally Japan, the 'yellow peril'.<sup>273</sup> If at this future time—after 1948, according to Hitler's plans—there were still Jews alive anywhere in the world, they would be the first to be murdered. A man who planned to let 30 million Russians starve to death,<sup>274</sup> and contemplated an offensive war against the United States, would certainly not let live those whom he had elected as his arch-enemy. 'In defending myself against the Jew,' wrote Hitler, who always saw himself in the role of the defender, 'I am fighting for the work of the Lord.'<sup>275</sup>

In Hitler's world the Jews had no chance of survival. If at first he wanted only to remove them from his sphere of power by forced emigration or

<sup>268</sup> Führer's conversation with Marshal Kvaternik in the presence of Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Keitel on 22 July 1941 at Führer HQ, *DGFP*, D, xiii/2. 203–4 (app. 3).

<sup>269</sup> Heydrich had expressed this view on several occasions, e.g. to Goebbels on 23 Sept. 1941; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, i. 480–1 (24 Sept. 1941).

<sup>270</sup> Speer, *Third Reich*, 179–80.

<sup>271</sup> Hitler had expressed himself similarly on an earlier occasion, Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Book*, 44.

<sup>272</sup> Weinberg, 'Germany's War for World Conquest', 123; Goda, *Tomorrow the World*; Dülffer, *Weimar, Hitler und die Marine*.

<sup>273</sup> At the beginning of 1942 Hitler warned his foreign minister: 'We have to think in terms of centuries. Sooner or later there will have to be a showdown between the white and the yellow races', quoted in Thies, *Architekt*, 162.

<sup>274</sup> 'Hitler intended to push the Reich's eastern frontier to the Baku–Stalingrad–Moscow–Leningrad line. East of this line there would be a "stretch of scorched earth" extending to the Urals, in which all life would be extinguished. In this stretch of land, some thirty million Russians would be starved to death by removing all foodstuffs from the huge area. All involved in this operation would be forbidden, on pain of death, to give a Russian as much as a piece of bread. The large cities from Leningrad to Moscow would be razed to the ground,' Six to Gersdorff in July 1941, quoted in Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 93. On the context see Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 53–4.

<sup>275</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 60.

deportation, so as to export anti-Semitism along with them<sup>276</sup> and thereby gain comrades-in-arms for his cause, the space in which Jews could survive grew narrower as Hitler's world expanded. Had he won the war, the 'Jewish question' would have been 'solved' after his victory—not in gas chambers, but fatally in any case. If, on the other hand, his war plans failed before he could embark on the 'final struggle', he would destroy all the Jews immediately, in which endeavour he could count on the support of willing executioners. That was what he ordered when the Anglo-American powers made it clear they would never stop fighting him. And that was what he boasted of in 1945, amidst the ruins of Berlin, a few days before his cowardly suicide: 'From this point of view, National Socialism can justly claim the eternal gratitude of the people for the fact that *I* have eliminated the Jew from Germany and central Europe.'<sup>277</sup>

<sup>276</sup> Nicosia, 'Ein nützlicher Feind'.

<sup>277</sup> Hitler, *Hitlers politisches Testament*, 122 (2 Apr. 1945).

### III. Society and Holocaust in the War

#### I. PLACE AND TIME AS FACTORS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

WHAT is German war society? Is it at all possible to speak of 'society' in time of war? And with regard to the Holocaust, can a schematic distinction be made between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders?<sup>1</sup> In the following discussion German war society is not considered as a homogeneous whole, but nor is it segmented or broken down into its smallest components. Instead, a cultural-historical approach has been adopted.<sup>2</sup> German war society is divided into four quadrants defined intrinsically by their spatial or temporal relation to the war. *Spatially*, it is divided into people who were outside the borders of the Reich during the war, mainly at the front, and people who remained permanently within it. *Temporally*, it is divided into the period during which the war took place outside the Reich and the period when it also took place within its borders. The differentiation and intersection of those four quadrants provides the basis for a sound description of German war society. The distinctions needed for picturing a society at war between front and home, between men and women, for example, are not discussed, but instead related to the division—one always difficult to pin down—into areas close to the front and those where an idyllic everyday existence far away from the war continued. It is not religion or gender, nor professional occupation or origin, that draw the dividing lines in war society, but the war itself. The approach we have described also enables us to follow society's various transformations in detail. It is particularly illuminating with respect to the Holocaust, and especially in regard to the question 'how much did Germans know?' Soldiers on leave, moving *spatially* from the front to the homeland, transformed society just as did their letters home, which, moving along the time dimension, increasingly brought the war to Germany in the form of knowledge and concern. With regard to the extermination of the Jews, this approach to war society is supplemented by a further division into perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.

The discussion focuses mainly on the period of the Holocaust itself, from the end of 1941 to the end of 1944. The war against the Soviet Union forms the framework, and along with it factors that historians have extensively investigated: the image of Russia in German society,<sup>3</sup> the consequences of 'ethnic community' in the war,<sup>4</sup> the exploitation of (eastern European) forced labour,<sup>5</sup> contact with Soviet prisoners of war,<sup>6</sup> displacement of the Reich's

<sup>1</sup> Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*.

<sup>2</sup> See the works of Jay Winter.

<sup>3</sup> Volkmann, *Das Rußlandbild*.

<sup>4</sup> Müller, 'Die Konsequenzen der "Volksgemeinschaft"'.  
<sup>5</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit*.

<sup>6</sup> Streit, *Keine Kameraden*; Otto, *Wehrmacht, Gestapo*.

borders, and the establishment of Reich commissariats and administrative structures beyond them. All these factors produced lasting changes in German war society.

War society is portrayed on both sides of the dividing lines: spatially, on the near side and far side of the Reich borders; temporally, before and after the war entered the Reich (at first in the form of aerial bombardment). The spatial division is the starting point of our analysis; the temporal division is woven into it.

But before proceeding, we must be quite clear that there was a great difference between German-ruled eastern Europe and the German-occupied west. The images invoked for the war in the east were quite different from those pertaining to the war in the west. German rule in the west rested on the principle of the legitimate use of force, and thus sought to remain within limits that had been exceeded in the First World War. In the east, every use of force was legalized in advance, and frequently retroactively.<sup>7</sup> Despite the insistence of the chief of the army general staff, Franz Halder, Hitler decided to renounce the use of chemical weapons at the front, even in the most difficult military situations,<sup>8</sup> while at the same time poison gas was employed to an unprecedented extent against the predominantly Jewish civilian population. The attempt, in the age of 'total war', to abide, in the west, by the principles of a war conducted according to the rules, while in the east the same principles were flouted as never before, was reflected in differential treatment of the civilian population according to whether its members were 'racially good', 'racially bad', subhuman, or simply Jewish.

If political rule, economy, and culture are the three 'basic yet interpenetrating and mutually conditioning dimensions of society', and bourgeois society, as a 'system of needs' in Hegel's sense, cannot be sharply delimited from the state,<sup>9</sup> then the economic and cultural fields are also of particular interest for German war society outside the borders of the Reich, and the opposition between victim and perpetrator is, from a social-history viewpoint, insufficiently defined by the dimension of political rule alone.

This clarifies the discussion of the everyday reality of political rule, especially in the east. The cynical slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' (work liberates), which Rudolf Höß, the commandant of Auschwitz, ordered to be put up over the entrance gate to the main camp,<sup>10</sup> epitomized a perversely racist amalgamation of work and freedom in which the victims were to bring freedom to their tormentors through the very process of being destroyed by work—that freedom being nothing else than freedom from the victims themselves. No wonder the same slogan was blazoned over the gates of many concentration camps in which the perpetrators and victims in German war society

<sup>7</sup> See Lagrou, 'Representations of War', 175.

<sup>8</sup> Müller, 'Die deutschen Gaskriegsvorbereitungen', 44–5.

<sup>9</sup> Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, i. 7–8.

<sup>10</sup> Höß, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, 77.



came together.<sup>11</sup> Auschwitz was described in the 1943 Baedeker guide to the Government-General as an industrial site, and it did include huge war-industry plants. But although it was situated in Upper Silesia and therefore within the territory of the Reich, the extermination process in neighbouring Birkenau transported the whole camp complex, in public perception, to the 'Wild East'. At any rate, the economic and cultural standards that applied there were different from those in the Reich.

## 2. GERMAN WAR SOCIETY OUTSIDE THE REICH, AND THE HOLOCAUST

One of the most significant features of German war society was that, outside the Reich, it was built anew and did not develop in the same way as in the Reich itself. Rather, it was modelled on the ideal society of National Socialist ideology, in which a master race under virile leadership selects and puts to use inferior peoples according to racial criteria. That happened in both western and eastern Europe; but while in the west the perpetrators formed a distinct group,<sup>12</sup> in the east the German victims deported there also belonged to German war society. Unlike the wives and children of the German perpetrators, the vast majority of whom remained in the Reich, the German women and children in German war society who were among its Jewish victims were deported to the east along with (if not always together with) the men, beyond the frontiers of the Reich or to its fringes. Thus it came about that German officers heard whole colonies of deported German Jews in the eastern ghettos speaking the Swabian dialect or with the characteristic Berlin accent.

The division into perpetrators, victims, and bystanders is harder to make outside the Reich than within its borders, mainly because none of these groups was homogeneous. Alongside the German perpetrators, many men of other nationalities took part in anti-Jewish pogroms. Victims and perpetrators became bystanders, bystanders became perpetrators or victims. Some became perpetrators, victims, or bystanders intentionally, while others found their specific role by dint of circumstances. The same person could be a member of all three groups at different times and places—in turn spectator, perpetrator, and victim. While all three groups have been the subject of ample research and successive debates about the issues, no approach has yet been based on their interdependence.

In the economic field, on the other hand, German war society outside the borders of the Reich was clearly divided into those for whose sake the war economy produced its goods, and those whose 'extermination through work' was intended to ensure 'final victory' in two ways: ideologically, by eliminating the danger of a 'second Jewish stab in the back'; materially, by exploiting

<sup>11</sup> The slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' was emblazoned not only on the gates of Auschwitz, but also on the gates of the Dachau, Gross-Rosen, Sachsenhausen, and Theresienstadt concentration camps.

<sup>12</sup> Lagrou, 'Representations of War'.

Jewish labour for the production of war goods.<sup>13</sup> This division, based on the racist logic described above, was maintained at every level and seen as being legitimized on both ideological and material grounds. When it came to food, Jews received the smallest rations both because they were to be exterminated anyway, and because those sections of society that were waging the war in occupied territory and in the homeland had to be fed first.<sup>14</sup>

In the cultural field, normality was a parody in the truest sense of the word. There was hardly a concentration camp without its orchestra and theatrical troupe: the victims pursued their cultural life in the face of death—condoned after a fashion, and frequently mocked, by the perpetrators. To a much greater extent than in the Reich, National Socialist rule beyond its borders destroyed the remaining commonalities of German society by means of state ordinances. The German Jews who had been deported ‘to the east’ through the exercise of state authority were not only forbidden to participate in all social activity—government, the economy, and culture—by the 11th ordinance of 25 November 1941 under the Reich Citizenship Law, the German state also deprived them of their nationality.<sup>15</sup> This transformation of German citizens into stateless ‘subhumans’ was mirrored horrifically by the transformation of other German citizens into members of a ‘master race’. Along with the Reich border, all boundaries of human decency seem to have disappeared. Not infrequently, German men in the east rampaged like monsters.

(a) *Wartime ‘Normality’*

The question of ‘wartime normality’, which illuminated the cultural history of the First World War, is the leitmotif of the present discussion. The simple fact that there is no consensus as to who was a ‘normal’ perpetrator, a ‘normal’ spectator, or a ‘normal’ victim opens up the field of what can be called ‘normal’ in wartime. Since extermination of the Jews was a shift in the norm that became normality, perfectly ‘normal’ people were among its perpetrators, bystanders, and victims. The aim of this discussion is to investigate the shift in the norm that transcended the distinction between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders to become wartime ‘normality’. Such an investigation can be meaningful only if based on a description of Holocaust locations in which German society was reconstituted during the war, such as Riga on 30 November 1941 and Auschwitz on 19 August 1942.

Furthermore, wartime ‘normality’ cannot be investigated without enquiring into the conditions which made the transformation of German war society possible. The enquiry is both clarified and complicated by two factors: on the one hand, observation of the breathtaking retransformation of German war society into German post-war society and, on the other, the hypothetical question of the conditions that might have prevented the transformation of German men into murderers and German Jews into victims. This investigation thus targets

<sup>13</sup> Gruner, *Der geschlossene Arbeitseinsatz deutscher Juden*.

<sup>14</sup> Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front*, 231–69.

<sup>15</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1941, 722.

what is perhaps most 'typically German' in modern German society, namely the specific relationship to the norm.

The concept of 'the norm' gained in importance from the nineteenth century onwards, especially in German-speaking countries. In the English-speaking world it is not a common term. Its various meanings can be roughly divided into two categories:

- prescriptive norms, which lay down objectives and forms of behaviour or action in a regulatory manner, with or without qualification, and impose sanctions for transgression of the norm or set pragmatic standards;
- descriptive norms that qualify certain events, situations, and things as 'normal'.

The history of National Socialism provides ready examples of both categories. The provisions of the anti-Jewish legislation decreed by the state normative authority,<sup>16</sup> which were applied to the letter, are examples of prescriptive norms. As descriptive norms we may cite such slogans of the National Socialist leadership as 'Right is what serves the State' and 'The Führer has ordered it, we obey', the purpose of which was to describe a 'normal state of affairs' without threat of sanctions. These and many other similar examples often comprised a mixture of both categories: many prescriptive norms lacked a specific threat of sanctions in the event of transgression—a typical feature of political terror—while many descriptive norms seemed not to be describing existing situations but to be aimed at bringing them about through description. In other words, in many cases German citizens were unable to distinguish between prescriptive and descriptive norms. That being so, the norms no longer prescribed or described normality: rather, uncertainty about the norms in force itself became normality. To make matters worse, many norms, although clearly recognizable as such by their form, could not be regarded as 'normal' according to hitherto prevailing ethical or legal concepts—neither the prescriptive anti-Jewish legislation nor the descriptive normative leadership provided by deliberately unclear (Führer) directives.

This suggests that a shift in the norm took place that reconstituted 'normality' but left the relationship between norm and normality unchanged.

The definition of norm contains an indication of a more fundamental possibility of such a shift that is essential to an understanding of National Socialism: 'The laws of logic are considered as norms, although they are neither prescriptive nor descriptive, but *lay down* the rules of right thinking.'<sup>17</sup>

The first norm which Hitler and his followers changed was logic itself: they did so by introducing a *new* logic, i.e. new rules of right thinking. This is the key to understanding the abrupt change that occurred in German society following the takeover of power and again after Hitler's suicide—a twofold

<sup>16</sup> Das *Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat*. <sup>17</sup> Schrader, 'Normen', 620 (emphasis added).

phenomenon that has so far resisted analysis by historical research oriented towards acts or interconnected facts. Since logic occurs as a *thought process* within individuals rather than in the form of verifiable acts, the introduction of the new logic by the National Socialist rulers resulted not in conflictual social discourse but in individual self-doubt. This self-doubt consisted precisely in doubting the rightness of one's own thinking. And when that is in question, active protest is impossible.<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of National Socialist rule the new logic still consisted in talk of the 'national revolution', although every logically thinking German could see there was no revolution except for a descriptive norm whose purpose was to create a revolution by describing it. This normative doubt had already manifested itself in the vote on the Enabling Act<sup>19</sup> by which Germany's elected representatives cleared the way for the 'revolution'. The same thing happened in autumn 1941 when the Jewish star badge was introduced in the Reich. Some members of the German people had apparently not yet internalized the new logic, according to which the Jews were their 'misfortune', since they demonstratively offered the newly marked Jews cigarettes, slipped them fruit and vegetables, offered them their seats in the trams, and handed out sweets to Jewish children. In all logic, a scrap of material on the clothing of another human being cannot arouse contempt or hatred, at least not in itself. But here the established norms were not tested against social reality, as usually happens. They were corrected by other norms supplied in their stead. The chief logician of National Socialism, Joseph Goebbels, found it necessary to explain the correct logic in an article entitled 'The Jews are to blame!', published in the weekly newspaper *Das Reich* on 16 November 1941:

The excuse they [Jew-lovers] give for their provocative conduct is always the same: after all, Jews are human beings too—as if we had ever denied it, or the same cannot be said of murderers, child rapists, thieves, and pimps, though no one feels the need to stroll down the Kurfürstendamm with them! Their Jew, they say, is a decent Jew. Every Jew seems to have found a dumb goy devoid of instinct who thinks him decent! As if that were a reason to give Jews an honourable escort. What nonsense.<sup>20</sup>

Goebbels went on to set out the correct logic as if reciting the catechism or teaching schoolchildren the rules of grammar:

1. The Jews are our ruin. They instigated this war and brought it about.  
They are plotting to destroy the German Reich and our people with it. They must be stopped.
2. All Jews are the same . . .
3. The Jews are to blame for every German soldier killed in this war . . .
5. The Jews are protected by our enemies abroad . . .

<sup>18</sup> See the masterly account of the beginning of this process in Haffner, *Geschichte eines Deutschen*.

<sup>19</sup> 'Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich', 24 Mar. 1933, *RGBl.* I, 1933, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Goebbels, *Das eiserne Herz*, 87.

6. The Jews are enemy agents in our midst . . .
7. The Jews are not entitled to equal rights among us. If they attempt to speak on the streets, in shop queues, or on public transport, they should be silenced, not only because they are fundamentally wrong but because they are Jews and have no right to a voice in the community . . .
9. A decent enemy deserves generous treatment after his defeat. But the Jew is not a decent enemy: he is only pretending.
10. The Jews are to blame for the war. The treatment they receive from us is not unfair.<sup>21</sup>

Every single point was a lie. Every single point contradicted the elementary logic of human coexistence. Every single point established norms that could be validated only by a new logic and consequently ceased to be valid when National Socialist logic collapsed.

The collapse of the new logic in May 1945 was much more straightforward than its construction over the previous twelve years. It was destroyed by its own contradictions, which had become clear for all to see: Germany had neither become a world power nor had it disappeared from the face of the earth.

The new logic was not dependent on belief in it. The old ideology debate, whose premisses have long been undermined by fresh research assumptions, suffers from having made belief in the National Socialist ideology—which was in any case not uniform<sup>22</sup>—a precondition for assent and collaboration. Logic, on the other hand, seems to be a self-conclusive system not easily abandoned from within or effectively criticized from outside. National Socialism, which claimed to embrace the total life experience literally ‘from the cradle to the grave’, went beyond indoctrination of the youth and the rewriting of world history. It came upon the scene at a difficult time, first and foremost as an alternative world- and life-scheme with the distinctive feature of incorporating its opponents. Were that not the case, the success of the Nazi Party and its twelve-year tyranny would be virtually inexplicable. Belief in the Führer was not a precondition but an integral part of the new logic, whose opponents were also unable to escape its treacherous effects.

The logic was treacherous precisely because it conditioned the thinking of both perpetrators and victims: ‘on the first day I wore the yellow star,’ Renée Firestone, a Slovakian Jewish woman, recounts, ‘I went into the street and one of my non-Jewish friends came towards me. I hoped she would come up to me to say how sorry she was about it all. But when she saw me, she crossed to the other side and passed me by. I realized then that something dreadful was happening and we were completely on our own.’<sup>23</sup> Only the fact that the thinking of the victims was permeated by the logic of the perpetrators can explain why there was no general Jewish uprising, no joint mass protest of ‘decent’ Germans, and no large-scale demonstrations by individual groups.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 90–1.

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent discussion of the lack of uniformity see Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie*.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Knopp, *Holokaust*, 120.

All too often, the doubters feared that they themselves were not thinking properly. Doubt reinforced repression of the truth, the feeling that what seemed impossible could not exist. That also explains how Jews on the way to Auschwitz-Birkenau were able to convince themselves that the rumours about an extermination camp could never be true. And that is why the mass of doubters in German war society did not offset the mass of those whose behaviour conformed to the system: the two groups were partly identical.

The capacity for self-doubt engendered by the new logic can also be presumed to have motivated the perpetrators' conflict with their allegiance to the Nazi regime. In many cases, unforced participation in war crimes and mass murder appears to have been determined less by group dynamics, which doubtless also played a part, than by the individual's fear of being in the wrong. It was only in this context that the maxims and slogans of Nazi propaganda could be transformed into a basis for individual conduct. Under conditions of humanitarian logic, the slogan 'Right is what serves the people' would still have worked in favour of sparing the Jews. Thorough consideration had been given to what was to be made accessible to the people in the form of simple slogans. By means of the new logic, Hitler sought to impose nothing less than a new world history, as he himself freely admitted during the war:

We, too, are rewriting history, from the racial standpoint. Starting with isolated examples, our radical revision is a question not only of studying the sources, but of the logic applied. There are natural processes that I cannot explain using the methods adopted hitherto. I have to approach them from a different standpoint, otherwise I cannot perceive them correctly.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the country's technocratic elite was less impressed by the norms based on the new racial logic expounded in Hitler's speeches, in which his own 'mission' of relentless struggle against 'eternal world Jewry' with the world as the trophy took pride of place and was raised to a 'law' embracing world history and world religions, than by the possibilities which the new logic opened up irrespective of belief in that ideology. Now that the ground rules of social existence obeyed the logic of natural selection and the struggle of the strong against the weak, technocrats and scientists at all levels of society, whether or not they believed in the racial laws, were able to prepare, accompany, and commit barbaric crimes far transcending the bounds of human decency. The new logic provided the skilled speaker (reiterator) with a ready choice of system-inherent logical justifications for his acts. Even in the post-war trials, many physicians, lawyers, and scientists had difficulties in freeing themselves from this well-practised manipulation of the language.<sup>25</sup>

The dichotomy between knowledge of one's own acts and their justification in the framework of the system logic can be seen time and again, even at the highest level. On the day Goebbels learnt, to his horror, that the Jews were being gassed in the east, he wrote in his diary:

<sup>24</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87 (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>25</sup> Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld*.

A judgment is being visited upon the Jews which, barbaric as it is, they have fully deserved. The Führer's prophecy of the fate in store for them if they started another world war is beginning to come true in the most terrible manner. In these matters, one must not give way to sentimentality. If we did not fight them, the Jews would destroy us. It is a life-and-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus.<sup>26</sup>

Every other sentence reveals Goebbels's own horror, which is then dispelled by the normative logic of the system. He justifies his admission that German treatment of the Jews is 'barbaric' by invoking Hitler's 'prophecy' of 30 January 1939, which apparently was spontaneously 'beginning to come true'. The need to repress the sentimentality that even the propaganda minister was feeling is justified by the myth of the 'Jewish menace' and the Jews' alleged destructive intent. The argument ends with the disparaging comparison between the superior 'master race' and the 'Jewish bacillus', which deprives Jewish fellow-citizens of their humanity.

As the war proceeded, the dimensions of place and time transformed the new logic into a 'war logic'. Talk of struggle as the basis of all existence was now experienced at close hand—in the death of family members, comrades, and enemies. The fundamental shift in the norm that created the new wartime 'normality' was seen most clearly in the criminal orders which—themselves establishing the logic of a war of extermination—became the basis for conduct of the war in the east:<sup>27</sup>

The secret extermination of the Jews, which logically buried antisemitism as an instrument of propaganda, illustrates the confusion between battle symbol and final goal.<sup>28</sup>

The most striking feature of the Nazi extermination of the Jews is that, although it began in public, its most horrific dimension unfolded in secret. That made no difference to victims: murder is murder whatever the circumstances. But for the perpetrators in German war society outside the Reich it was a system-stabilizing factor of prime importance that also tells us more about the nature of the extermination programme itself. Contact with the public ceased only when extermination became a programme. The 'cleansing operations' of the *Einsatzgruppen* behind the front in Poland, Serbia, and initially in the Soviet Union were carried out in full public view, whereas systematic extermination pursuant to Hitler's order was transferred to the specific camp society of the concentration and extermination camps in the east. It was carried out behind closed doors, out of sight of war society.

Hitler and his followers thereby showed their own logic to be corrupt. Clearly, the rules of logic, i.e. the rules of right thinking, must be open to the whole world: their public nature constitutes the basis for right, or at least

<sup>26</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iii. 561 (27 Mar. 1942).

<sup>28</sup> Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation', 408.

<sup>27</sup> See pp. 299–300 above



socially conforming, action. Where, as in this case, the rules of right thinking are called into question, if only by being kept secret, all action based on them is corrupted at the outset. The new logic had still operated in fashioning the Germans' image of Russia, creating a picture of the Russian subhuman that extended right into the educated strata of society and allowed anti-human acts to go unquestioned.<sup>29</sup> Even in the Reich people were surprised that Russian forced labourers were able even to count.<sup>30</sup> When it came to extermination, however, a division contrary to all logic was created between participants (ie those party to the secret) and non-participants (ie those not entitled to know). This is nowhere so obvious as in the exchange between ministerial adviser Herbert Linden and SS-Brigadeführer Globocnik, reported by Kurt Gerstein: 'Mr Globoc[nik], do you think it a good idea to bury all the bodies rather than burn them? After us there might come a generation that doesn't understand the whole business!'—to which Globocnik replied: 'Gentlemen, if there is ever a generation after us so feeble and weak-kneed that it doesn't understand our great achievement, the whole of National Socialism will have been in vain. On the contrary, bronze tablets should be buried stating that it was we who had the courage to carry out this momentous and so necessary task.'<sup>31</sup> Here, logic corresponded to behaviour and—in its perverted but logical form—to Kant's categorical imperative.<sup>32</sup>

Keeping the extermination secret diametrically contradicted the new logic, giving rise to a dichotomy between knowing and not-knowing that was based on behaviour. Suddenly, the preconditions for right thinking were established by deeds—a vicious circle of the first order. No longer were those who based their deeds on correct deductions acting correctly: instead, those participating in (secret) murder had their deeds legitimized *ipso facto* and were obeying the (secret) logic of the state. With the advent of the extermination programme, the *Volksgemeinschaft* only recently proclaimed on the basis of the new logic was divided into an esoteric circle of criminals against humanity, who were in the know and obeyed a logic established by deeds, and the remaining members of the German people, who were to be left in the dark and, as non-participants, could even be prosecuted and punished for acquiring knowledge of the extermination process.

In March 1944, for example, the special court in Opole found the wife of a Wehrmacht soldier, Anna N., a German smallholder living 200 kilometres from Auschwitz, guilty of spreading rumours that 'Poles were being burned alive in the camp at Auschwitz.' She was sentenced to a fine of 180 Reichsmarks. Anna K., however, who was a Polish shopkeeper, was sentenced to five years in a penal camp for saying that 'inmates in the Auschwitz concentration camp are put into the crematory ovens alive and die in agony', as well as calling Hitler a 'decrepit frog' and a 'whoremonger'.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Volkman, *Das Rußlandbild*.

<sup>30</sup> *Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat*, iii. 274.

<sup>31</sup> 'Gerstein Report', LKA Bielefeld, 5, 2 NS No. 31.

<sup>32</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz', 248–9.

So if extermination was right according to the new logic, and was furthermore founded on Hitler's prophecy, why was it kept secret and from whom? Or, to put it another way, if extermination had to be kept secret because it contradicted the logic of the Nazi system or might have been implemented by local functionaries without authorization, in a self-radicalizing process,<sup>34</sup> would it not have had to be kept secret from Hitler too? The answer is that the truth about extermination would have immediately exposed its evil nature. This changed the way extermination was to be handled, and Hitler himself laid down the guidelines. While Hitler had at first been openly aggressive about extermination, proclaiming the evil deed to be the law-defying component of the new terror logic, lying about the extermination programme became government policy as soon as it became clear that the evil deed was altering society itself.

During the mass events of autumn 1941, Hitler proclaimed: 'It is good that horror at our extermination of Jewry should go ahead of us.'<sup>35</sup> When expecting victory in the territorial war against the Soviet Union, he had seen himself as a history-making conqueror who could propound the new logic aggressively. ('The victor will not be asked afterwards whether he told the truth or not. In starting and waging a war it is not right that matters, but victory.'<sup>36</sup>) On 11 July 1943, however, when secret mass extermination in closed camps was at its height and the military situation was constantly deteriorating, he informed Martin Bormann, the head of the Reich chancellery, that: 'In public treatment of the Jewish question, all mention of a future total solution must be avoided. It may be mentioned, however, that Jews are being deployed collectively on dedicated labour tasks.'<sup>37</sup> The lie about the only-too-well-known fact of extermination was thereby given official sanction at the highest level.

In his Poznań speech of October 1943, even Heinrich Himmler, the second man in the extermination hierarchy, could tell the truth only as a secret to be concealed: 'I also want to speak to you, in all frankness, on a very difficult subject. Let us for once discuss it among ourselves quite openly, though we shall never mention it in public . . . I am referring to evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people.'<sup>38</sup> Admittedly, Himmler put this secret truth on record (his Poznań speech was issued in written form and even a gramophone recording was made)—so much so that the contradiction between public knowledge and secrecy became a wearisome moral problem for the perpetrators. What was, according to the new logic, 'a page of glory in our history', was contradicted by the qualification that it was 'never to be written'. An official reason for the increased secrecy never needed to be given: it was inherent in the extermination process itself. The deeds were evil and recognizably so. As a high-court judge remarked right at the beginning of the

<sup>34</sup> As claimed, for example, by David Irving, Irving, *Hitler's War*.

<sup>35</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87 (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>36</sup> Speech by Hitler to leaders of the Wehrmacht on 22 Aug. 1939, repr. in IMT, xxvi. 523.

<sup>37</sup> Circular No. 33/43 g., 11 July 1943, IT, N 314.

<sup>38</sup> IMT, xxiv. 145–6.

Russian campaign, the aim was not to justify extermination but simply to hush it up. After the war, no perpetrator ever claimed in his defence that extermination had been a good thing.<sup>39</sup> Each had had what Himmler called 'this huge burden, this huge order' imposed upon him from above. So obviously evil were the deeds at the time of their performance that they threatened to destroy the mental foundation on which they rested. Himmler's Poznań speech was a lauding of evil that made its hearers accomplices simply by hearing it: since extermination was a secret, they could not complain of it without betraying a secret. So the truth about extermination became a lie in itself. Only as a lie could the knowledge of extermination stabilize the Nazi system right to the end, as it spread through society along with awareness of the truth. At the same time, the secrecy surrounding Auschwitz, which was in fact no secrecy at all, aroused fear of the victors' revenge; and that fear that was played upon by official propaganda at full blast.

(b) *Reconstitution of German War Society at the Places of Mass Extermination*

Beyond the borders of the Reich, German war society was reconstituted at the places of mass extermination. There the transformed German perpetrator society, the reflection of a racial 'ideal society' in the process of asserting itself as the 'master race', encountered its victims, that section of German war society which had long been deprived of its rights and any pleasure in living, and was now given up to extermination. As a rule, the German perpetrators no longer saw their German victims as Germans. This was due not so much to the 11th ordinance of 25 November 1941 under the Reich Citizenship Law,<sup>40</sup> by which German Jews were deprived of German nationality *de jure* upon leaving the Reich, as to the new logic, according to which Jews had long ceased to be Germans. The structural transformation of the public sphere<sup>41</sup> that had begun with the National Socialist takeover of power inside the Reich peaked in the murder of Jews outside the Reich, which was at first carried out in public. That peak was exceeded only in the subsequent public denial of extermination.

With regard to the Holocaust, the difference between German war society inside and outside the Reich can be described no more clearly than by an account of the events in Riga on 30 November 1941.

On the evening of 29 November 1941 a German passenger train carrying 1,035 German Jews from Berlin arrived in Riga. The Jewish communal authorities in Berlin had been informed by the Gestapo of the planned 'resettlement' of Jewish families at the same time as all other Jewish communities in Germany,<sup>42</sup> and the synagogue on Levetzowstraße had been designated as the assembly centre.<sup>43</sup> Only a few 'resettlement transports' had left Berlin since 18 October 1941, at irregular intervals,<sup>44</sup> when the group of over a

<sup>39</sup> Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld*.

<sup>40</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1941, 722.

<sup>41</sup> Habermas's phrase is absolutely apposite in this context; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

<sup>42</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 395–6.

<sup>43</sup> Gruner, *Judenverfolgung in Berlin*, 80.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

thousand Germans of the Jewish faith, a highly heterogeneous society, boarded the eastward-bound train on 27 November with no great fuss, carrying, duly labelled, the few possessions they were allowed to bring with them. There was no sign of any opposition by the people of Berlin to the 'resettlement' of their Jewish fellow-citizens, nor did the Jewish communal authorities feel willing or able to formulate an effective protest. On the contrary, the Jewish community of Berlin harboured hopes of a better future outside the Reich. 'It was evident that some of the Jews had a completely false idea of their future, for example, that they were pioneers sent out to colonize the east . . .'<sup>45</sup>

German war society outside the Reich had as yet no clear idea of what was to be done with the deported Jews in the east. The fact that no reception camps, labour camps, or extermination facilities had been prepared for the German Jews in the east is sufficient proof that Hitler's order to proceed with the 'final solution of the Jewish question' during the war, in which the order to deport the German Jews originated, came as an unexpected decree from on high. The thesis of 'radicalization from below' is contradicted, for example, by the fact that SS-Sturmabführer Rudolf Lange of all people, the commander of *Einsatzkommando 2*, responded to the situation not by requesting an increase in the personnel assigned to his murder squads, but by calling for the construction of a concentration camp in Riga.<sup>46</sup> He wanted to transfer the eastern European Jews in the Riga ghetto, who numbered at least 23,000, together with the approximately 3,000 inmates of the Riga prison, to a concentration camp in order to exploit their labour more efficiently. His immediate assumption was that the Jews deported from Germany would remain in the Riga ghetto for a considerable time. In Berlin, however, Lange's request was approved in a different form: a camp (subsequently Salaspils concentration camp) was to be built 'on the Daugava river, 20 kilometres upstream from Riga', with a 'capacity of 25,000', but it was intended for Jews deported from Germany and the occupied territories rather than the Jews and prison inmates of Riga.<sup>47</sup> It transpired shortly afterwards that the construction of gas chambers by Operation T-4 personnel was planned.<sup>48</sup> The local commanders had not encouraged this development by adopting radical measures on their own initiative. On the contrary, they protested against the order from Berlin. At a meeting with Otto Heinrich Drechsler, general commissioner for Latvia, and Rudolf Lange on 24 October 1941, Hinrich Lohse, the Reich commissioner for Ostland, complained that he had not been informed in good time of the 'measures planned, which were of exceptional political importance'. SS-Sturmabführer Lange explained that he had 'acted only on the order of Obergruppenführer Heydrich, which required urgent action since the first

<sup>45</sup> Event notification No. 151 (5 Jan. 1942), BA R 58/220, 14, and *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 269.

<sup>47</sup> File note by Drechsler, general commissioner for Latvia, 20 Oct. 1941, YIVO, Occ E 3-29; see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 461.

<sup>48</sup> Wetzel to Lohse, 25 Oct. 1941, quoted in Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 462.

transport would already be arriving on 10 November'.<sup>49</sup> Reich commissioner Lohse assured him that he would 'clarify the matter in Berlin the next morning, 25 October 1941'.<sup>50</sup>

On 25 October 1941 Lohse was not the only one seeking clarification from the centre regarding extermination of the Jews.<sup>51</sup> That day Himmler himself returned from a trip to Belorussia, during which he had discussed extermination of the Jews at a meeting with the senior SS and police leader for Russia Central, SS-Obergruppenführer and general of police Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, and SS-Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik. He arrived at the Führer's headquarters in the evening,<sup>52</sup> but he was not Hitler's only guest. Heydrich too had come to Führer HQ from Prague.<sup>53</sup> Hitler spoke with Himmler and Heydrich about the 'final solution of the Jewish question'.<sup>54</sup> He was still on the subject when they sat down to dinner and, in the usual manner, a stenographer began to record Hitler's table talk:

In the Reichstag I prophesied to Jewry that, should war prove inevitable, the Jew would disappear from Europe. That race of criminals has on its conscience the two million dead of the First World War, and now hundreds of thousands more. Let nobody tell me that, all the same, we can't drive them into the swamps! Who is concerned about our own people? It is good that horror at our extermination of Jewry goes ahead of us.<sup>55</sup>

By invoking his prophecy, which he always did when referring to physical extermination, Hitler supplied the correct logic for the perpetrators against the background of defeat in the First World War.

Hitler would scarcely have dictated the plans for the technical implementation of industrial mass extermination to his senior SS henchmen on that occasion. Also on 25 October, administrative court judge Erhard Wetzel, head of the racial-policy department in the Reich ministry for the occupied eastern territories, drafted a letter to Reich commissioner Lohse in response to his objections. It could not have been clearer:

[T]his is to inform you that chief administrative officer Brack of the Führer chancellery has agreed to collaborate in the production of the required accommodation and gassing devices. At this time, the envisaged devices are not available in sufficient quantity; they will first have to be manufactured . . . Brack points out that the procedure in question is not without danger, so special protective measures are necessary. In these circumstances, I request that you address yourself to chief administrative officer Brack at the Führer chancellery through your senior SS and police leader and

<sup>49</sup> Note on conference at the Reich commissioner's HQ on 24 Oct. 1941, drawn up on 27 Oct. 1941, YIVO, Occ E 3-30.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>51</sup> There is still little known about the precise course of this 'clarification': see Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer*, 144; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 461-2.

<sup>52</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 244-6.

<sup>53</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87 (25 Oct. 1941).

<sup>54</sup> On 21 Oct. 1941 Heydrich had asked Bormann for a mutually convenient date for a meeting with Himmler at Hitler's HQ, to discuss 'a series of fundamental questions and various details'; archives of the Czech interior ministry, 114-2-24, 463; see Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 246.

<sup>55</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, 87 (25 Oct. 1941).

request secondment of the chemist [Helmut] Kallmeyer and other assistants. I should inform you that Sturmbannführer Eichmann, the RSHA's Jewish affairs specialist, is in agreement with this procedure. According to information from Sturmbannführer Eichmann, camps for Jews are to be set up in Riga and Minsk, to which Jews from the *Altreich* territory may also come . . . As matters stand, there are no objections if Jews unfit for work are eliminated by the Brackian means. In this way, events . . . which, considering that the shootings were carried out in public, can hardly be approved, will no longer be possible.<sup>56</sup>

Himmler no doubt had the same considerations in mind when, on a visit to Mogilev on 23 October 1941, he initiated the order of a huge crematorium in which to incinerate the (Jewish) corpses from a gas chamber to be built on that site.<sup>57</sup> Before plans for the construction of extermination facilities at deportation terminal points in Riga, Chełmno, Mogilev, and Lvov<sup>58</sup> were radically changed by the course of the war and, after the declaration of war on the United States, by expansion of the war into a world war—a change that led to the construction of the Operation REINHARD extermination camps—Himmler issued orders to his senior SS and police leaders in the east to begin the 'final solution' using conventional methods, i.e. mass shootings. The Reichsführer SS still hoped to be able to use Jewish labour, on the way to extermination, for the construction of his racial empire in the east.<sup>59</sup>

On 31 October 1941 SS-Obergruppenführer and general of police Friedrich Jeckeln, a seasoned killer who had been responsible for the Babi Yar massacre, took over in Riga as senior SS and police leader for Ostland and Russia North, replacing SS-Obergruppenführer and general of police Hans-Adolf Prützmann, who was transferred to Kiev in his stead. The exchange had been ordered by Himmler,<sup>60</sup> who now instructed Jeckeln to carry out the extermination of 'all the Jews in Ostland to the last man'.<sup>61</sup> Since these consisted primarily of the 30,000 east European Jews shut up in the Riga ghetto, Jeckeln had huge pits dug by German and Latvian police contingents in the Rumbuli forest, some 5 kilometres from Riga, and ordered the ghetto clearance for 30 November 1941.<sup>62</sup> There can be no doubt that the German regular police who dug the pits in the Rumbuli forest knew in principle what they were to be used for. What the perpetrators in German war society outside the Reich did not yet necessarily know, however, was that they would shortly be encountering the victims in that society. The resulting encounter changed German war society

<sup>56</sup> Wetzel to Lohse, 25 Oct. 1941, quoted in Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 462.

<sup>57</sup> Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz*, 38–41 (not in English); Aly, *Final Solution*, 223–4; Gerlach, 'Failure of Plans', 62–4; Breitman, *Official Secret*, 75–8; Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 245 n. 75 (23 Oct. 1941).

<sup>58</sup> In Chełmno and Riga gassing trucks were to be used, in Mogilev a stationary gas chamber was planned. See statement by Wetzel, 20 Sept. 1961, StA Hannover, 2Js 499/61, ii. 18; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 648–51; Sandkühler, *Endlösung in Galizien*, 159–65; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 445.

<sup>60</sup> See Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 244 (23 Oct. 1941).

<sup>61</sup> Interrogation of Jeckeln, 14–15 Dec. 1945, Riga, repr. in Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, 566–70, here 566.

<sup>62</sup> Scheffler, 'Einsatzgruppe A', 40.



both inside and outside the Reich beyond question, not least because members of German war society outside the Reich murdered their former neighbours while those inside laid hands on their property. Although it was already quite usual for German regular police and Wehrmacht units, as well as German administrative personnel and SS men, to participate actively in the extermination of the local Jewish population, Friedrich Jeckeln seems to have doubted whether the men seconded to him were ready for action when it came to murdering deported German fellow-citizens. At any rate, for the first shootings on that early Sunday morning he relied on only a dozen of his own men.<sup>63</sup>

The German passenger train carrying 1,035 Berlin Jews arrived in Riga on the evening of 29 November 1941 and stood overnight somewhere on the tracks. It was the third night the well-dressed Berliners in the train had spent away from home, and there was little to indicate they were not looking forward with tense composure to the beginning of the new week after the Sabbath. Outside, it was snowing gently. When they were awakened the next morning, the temperature outside was minus eight degrees Celsius.<sup>64</sup> The encounter between perpetrators and victims in Riga was brutal. The passengers from Berlin were torn from their sleep in the dark, hounded out of the train, and hustled into an empty field near woodland, surrounded by armed German units and Latvian police. German orders rang in their ears. They were all forced to undress. Armed men in uniform or civilian dress appeared on the slopes overlooking the pits. Many of them were German. When the first Berlin Jews were led to a huge pit and around 0815h the first shots rang out, women, children, and men broke out in heartrending screams and pleading.<sup>65</sup> By 0900h no German victims were left alive. But that was by no means the end of it. At least a further 13,000 Jews from the Riga ghetto were shot in the forest outside Riga on that and the following two days. German war society was divided by neither war nor the borders of the Reich, but by guilt and suffering.

The perversity of the attempt to build German war society anew as an ideal reflection of the racial 'national community' dreamed up by Hitler, leaving all the old values behind, is clear from a remark made by a captive German general to a fellow prisoner of war shortly after the end of the war: 'as for racial purity, in Riga they screwed them [the Jewish women] first then shot them so they couldn't talk about it.'<sup>66</sup>

The murder of 1,035 Berlin Jews and 26,000 ghetto dwellers in Riga was watched by high-ranking eyewitnesses. In addition to Jeckeln, who supervised the operation of his men, Reich commissioner Lohse<sup>67</sup> and the commander

<sup>63</sup> The '20 men seconded from EK 2 for reasons of security' were brought into the murder operation for the first time for the shooting of the Jews from the Riga ghetto; event notification No. 151 (5 Jan. 1942), BA R 58/220; see also *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, 269.

<sup>64</sup> Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, 79.

<sup>65</sup> Testimony of the Rumbuli stationmaster, Albert I. Baranowskij, 18 Nov. 1944, to the Soviet investigating authorities, IfZ, Fb 101/16.

<sup>66</sup> CSDIC Report SRGG 1158, 25 Apr. 1945, PRO, WO 208/4177.

<sup>67</sup> Longerich, *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*, 98 n. 40.



of *Einsatzgruppe A*, SS-Brigadeführer and major-general of police Walter Stahlecker, were also present, as were officers of the police and Wehrmacht, members of the civil administration, SS men, and Latvian officers. Word had gone round that a special show was being put on near Riga on 30 November.

Col. Walter Bruns, who was stationed in Riga and commanded the local bridging staff unit, heard on Friday, 28 November 1941 that the planned mass execution was to take place shortly. He decided to query it with his superiors at the beginning of the following week. However, early on the morning of Sunday, 30 November he was out riding near the Rumbuli forest when he heard sustained machine-gun fire and saw what was going on. He immediately dispatched two officers to the scene in order to have witnesses.<sup>68</sup> One of them was Capt. Otto Schulz-Du Bois. When Bruns was told exactly what was happening in the Rumbuli forest, he ordered the two officers to draw up a written report, which he sent to Army Group North immediately through the official channels.<sup>69</sup> No action is known to have been taken in response to this initiative, and Bruns seems to have sensed in advance that none would be forthcoming. The next day he left very early for Angerburg in East Prussia, to report directly to army high command HQ. He intended to hand in a second copy of the report in person and, by bringing the pressure of his office and rank to bear, ensure, through the other official channel open to him, that it was acted upon.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps the clocks at the highest army command centre in the Reich ran faster than those at Army Group North's field headquarters. Bruns's immediate superior was Gen. Alfred Jacob, the general in charge of sappers and fortifications in the army high command. Bruns was received immediately by Col. Erich Abberger, Jacob's chief of staff, and made his report in a state of great agitation. Abberger explained that the Führer had ordered the Wehrmacht to stay out of 'political matters', and hinted that the report could endanger Bruns's career.<sup>71</sup> Bruns, however, had come to Angerburg precisely in order to ensure his report was transmitted, and he made that clear. Whereupon Abberger picked up the phone in Bruns's presence to find out through which channel the report should best be sent in order to produce a response.<sup>72</sup> Both colonels thought Hitler himself would have to be approached. That is the most surprising thing about the whole procedure, since the report could have been sent to Jeckeln's superior, Himmler, via the local SS authorities. Since the two Wehrmacht officers thought only Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, head of the counter-intelligence foreign department, would be able to approach Hitler on the matter, Abberger sent the report to Maj. Albert Radke of the OKH counter-intelligence foreign department (special duties). No reply was ever received from that quarter.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Conversation between Maj.-Gen. Bruns and others, tapped on 25 Apr. 1945, as per 'Transcript of conversation including Generalmajor Bruns', CSDIC-Report SRGG 1158, PRO, WO 208/4177; similar wording in OKW Trial (Case 12), statement by Walter Bruns, 18 Feb. 1948, 841, BA Film 44340.

<sup>69</sup> This report has not been found so far in the files of Army Group North.

<sup>70</sup> OKW Trial (Case 12), statement by Walter Bruns, 18 Feb. 1948, 844, BA Film 44340.

<sup>71</sup> Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, 81–2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 81–2.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 81, 84.

This episode has been recounted in detail because it is representative of a large part of German war society outside the Reich, i.e. the soldiers of the Wehrmacht. In so far as they had not simply stopped thinking for themselves, they appear to have lost confidence in their own military leadership when it came to ethical norms that transcended the logic of the Nazi system. Col. Walter Bruns had no reason to travel to his superiors in the Reich other than that, for good reason, he had long lost his trust in the corrupt Wehrmacht leadership outside the Reich. If, at the level of officers with the rank of colonel, like Bruns and Abberger, a vague 'Führer order' could be invoked (in most cases successfully) to suppress reports of war crimes and crimes against humanity, ordinary soldiers must have had much less chance of a hearing, or of getting another answer than 'Führer order' to any questions they might raise.

On 28 November 1941 Bruns had intervened with chief of staff Werner Altemeyer in Riga in an attempt to get the mass executions postponed at least until he had received his superiors' reply to his intended queries.<sup>74</sup> On being told the matter was covered by a 'Führer order', Bruns had stuck to his guns.<sup>75</sup> It is therefore not out of the question that Altemeyer reported Bruns to his superiors as a troublemaker, and that the report, given the potential nuisance, finally landed up on Himmler or Heydrich's desk. The SS leadership must have feared that Bruns might really travel to army high command in the Reich and his report would not remain blocked at Army Group HQ. In which case it would immediately become known that the deportations of German Jews, which had only just begun, led straight to the mass graves of the senior SS and police leaders, and that this was deliberate Reich policy. In late November Hitler himself had expressed himself to Goebbels on the need for caution in handling deportation of the Jews: 'He wants an energetic policy against the Jews, but one that does not cause us unnecessary difficulties. Evacuation of the Jews is to be undertaken city by city.'<sup>76</sup> Local violent excesses against Jews, according to the well-known apology from the SS, had been impossible to prevent, but the fact that German Jews were being murdered on arrival—as had happened in Kaunas on 25 and 29 November 1941 to five transports from Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Vienna, and Breslau<sup>77</sup>—was still kept secret in the Reich. At 1330h on 30 November, Himmler phoned Heydrich in Prague and jotted two sentences in his phone diary: 'Jewish transport from Berlin. No liquidation.'<sup>78</sup> But it was too late for that.

Himmler again phoned Heydrich about 'the executions in Riga' at 1315h the following day,<sup>79</sup> after Bruns had made his report at army high command in Angerburg. At 1930h Himmler sent two radio telegrams to Jeckeln. In

<sup>74</sup> Conversation between Maj.-Gen. Bruns and others, tapped on 25 Apr. 1945, as per 'Transcript of conversation including Generalmajor Bruns', CSDIC-Report SRGG 1158, PRO, WO 208/4177.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt., ii. 340–1 (22 Nov. 1941).

<sup>77</sup> Jäger-Report, 1 Dec. 1941, IfZ, Fb 76(a), 3253/63.

<sup>78</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 278 (30 Nov. 1941).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 280 (1 Dec. 1941).

the first he asked him to a meeting;<sup>80</sup> in the second he wrote: 'The Jews resettled in Ostland are to be treated only in accordance with directives laid down by me or the Reich security main office acting on my instructions. Any unauthorized action or contravention of those directives *would* be punished by me.'<sup>81</sup> It is impossible to say whether Himmler was simply trying to cover himself against menacing enquiries from army high command or whether those directives actually existed. What is certain is that Himmler issued directives regarding the shooting of Jews on 12 December 1941.<sup>82</sup> These must have been what Altemeyer showed triumphantly to Bruns two weeks after the massacre: 'Here is an order I have received that mass shootings of that kind must not take place in future. It must be done with greater caution.'<sup>83</sup>

The news of the beginning of the Holocaust did not reach the Reich only through tortuous official channels. In January 1942 Reserve Capt. Schulz-Du Bois, whose account had been the basis of Bruns's report, wrote a letter to his wife which, to avoid censorship, he gave to a friend on his way to the Reich. In that letter he told her what had happened since the report had been delivered. On the way to Frankfurt on Christmas leave, Bruns and Schulz-Du Bois had stopped off at army high command in Angersburg to enquire about their report, and Schulz-Du Bois had done so again on the way back:

On the way back to Riga after my leave, I again went to army high command, where I had been with the colonel [Bruns] on the way home. I enquired among other things about the fate of the report concerning Jewish affairs in Riga and learned the following in the relevant department: the report, which even for a department accustomed to all kinds of horrors was a maximum both qualitatively and in the sordid manner of the liquidations, had been referred to the head of department, an officer with the rank of general, for transmission to the chief of counter-intelligence—precisely on the grounds that such things endangered the morale of the troops who saw and heard about them. The chief of counter-intelligence, who has easy access to the Führer, apparently stressed to him once again the consequences and horrific nature of these methods, to which the Führer apparently replied: 'You are getting soft, sir! I have to do it, because after me no one else will!' Apart from this, the whole atmosphere in the department was absolutely catastrophic. All the officers I spoke to shared our view, and I mean all. They were terrified at the future in store for the German people.<sup>84</sup>

The truth of the extermination of the Jews must be clearly distinguished from *enquiry* into the truth of the extermination of the Jews. For German war

<sup>80</sup> Signed Grothmann to Jeckeln, OEJ de DSQ, GPD No. 2, 1 Dec. 1941, No. 24, PRO, HW 16/32.

<sup>81</sup> Signed Himmler to Jeckeln, OEJ de SDQ, GPD No. 2, 1 Dec. 1941, No. 25, PRO, HW 16/32 (emphasis added).

<sup>82</sup> Himmler to senior SS and police leaders, 12 Dec. 1941, Latvian State Archives Riga, 83-1-80.

<sup>83</sup> Conversation between Maj.-Gen. Bruns and others, tapped on 25 Apr. 1945, as per 'Transcript of conversation including Generalmajor Bruns', CSDIC-Report SRGG 1158, PRO, WO 208/4177.

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Capt. Otto Schulz-Du Bois to his wife, Jan. 1942, IfZ, ZS 3124.

society outside the Reich, the Holocaust became an open secret.<sup>85</sup> And the more open the secret became, the more the members of that society shied clear of direct knowledge of the details. A person who came too closely into contact with the truth about the extermination of the Jews against his will could shake it off only in the rarest cases. On 1 December the unsuspecting town commissar and mayor of Riga, Hugo Wittrock, went to the Riga ghetto to make an inventory of Jewish property. When he arrived and was confronted with the fact that most of the ghetto dwellers had already been shot, he resigned responsibility for the ghetto in protest. After getting used to the truth of the extermination of the Jews, he resumed his duties.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, a person who endeavoured to enquire into the truth of the extermination of the Jews received an answer only in the rarest cases. Where honest answers were given, they had mostly not been asked for. The most famous instance is Heinrich Himmler's speech to SS-Gruppenführers in Poznań on 4 October 1943:

It's easily said. 'The Jewish people is being exterminated,' any Party member will tell you, 'quite right, it's in our programme, elimination of the Jews, extermination, so we're doing it.' And then along they all come, all the 80 million upright Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. Of course, the others are swine, but this one is a first-class Jew. Of all those who talk like this, none of them has seen it, none has endured it. Most of you will know what it means when 100 corpses lie together, when there are 500 or 1,000 of them. To have stood fast through this and – except for cases of human weakness – to have stayed decent, that has made us hard. This is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory in our history. Because we know how difficult things would be, if today in every city during the bomb attacks, the burdens of war and the privations, we still had Jews as secret saboteurs, agitators and instigators. We would probably be at the same stage as in 1916–17 if the Jews still resided in the body of the German people . . . We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people to do it, to kill this people who wanted to kill us . . . But altogether we can say: We have carried out this extremely difficult task for the love of our people. And we have incurred no blemish within us, in our soul, or in our character.<sup>87</sup>

Further measures were needed, however, before this shift in the norm in 1943 could be publicly described as normality. Both the Normative State and the Prerogative State were expanded in this respect, and their intersection resulted in a structural transformation of the public sphere.

The norm outside the Reich was already transformed by the reconstitution of German war society outside the Reich—not so much by the fatal collision between perpetrators and victims as by the coming together of members of the civil administration, armed forces, police, and the SS units active there. After prior protest against the planned 'Jewish mass measures' failed to have

<sup>85</sup> On the open secret see Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien*, 300, 304–31; *Letzte Spuren*, 313; Scheffler, 'The Forgotten Part', 36; Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz', 318–19.

<sup>86</sup> Scheffler, 'Einsatzgruppe A', 40.

<sup>87</sup> IMT, xxix, quoted on 145–6.

any effect, retroactive defensive reactions on the part of the civil administration, local residents, the SS units involved, or the Wehrmacht, were directed only in very few cases against the fact of the new normality of extermination of the Jews, but rather, as had already been the case with certain departments,<sup>88</sup> against the specific measures taken in individual instances.

Applying the specific definition of the function of norms—‘Because they are imperative, norms are considered, in terms of their function, as “contrafactual stabilizing behaviour expectations” (Luhmann, *Normen*, 537) that establish (specific) expectation models for (sub-)areas of the social system’<sup>89</sup>—we may conclude that the fact of the extermination of the Jews in German war society outside the Reich became the norm because its implementation directly reflected the expectation that this was now normality. Extermination of the Jews could become a norm, and thus normality, only because perpetrators and bystanders committed the acts *in situ* together with the order-givers by reason of their specific experience, and because the order-givers, in return, verified the factual validity of their orders through performance of the acts and the reaction to them: ‘The factual validation of existing norms is not reflexive, but is established—as is their formation—by observation of the behaviour of norm-producers and norm-subjects.’<sup>90</sup>

It has been noted on several occasions that a principled protest, such as that against ‘euthanasia’ in the Reich, could have stopped extermination of the Jews; at least it would have stopped it becoming a norm. Instead, in most cases protest was confined to the way in which the new norm was implemented.

On 19 August 1942, at 1400h precisely, chief engineer Kurt Prüfer entered the office of the Central Building Administration in Auschwitz. Prüfer was employed by the Erfurt firm of Topf & Sons and sold crematoria to the SS.<sup>91</sup> His journey from Erfurt had not taken him outside the Reich since, strictly speaking, Auschwitz was not outside the Reich at all: it was located on the edge of Upper Silesia on the German side of the Reich border.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps the fact that the mass extermination took place in the Reich, and not somewhere in the ‘Wild East’, gave the name of Auschwitz a special ring for posterity,

<sup>88</sup> On 16 July 1941 SS-Sturmbannführer Höppner, head of the Central Office for Migration in Poznań, had written to Adolf Eichmann: ‘There is a danger this winter that it will no longer be possible to feed all the Jews. Serious consideration should be given to whether the most humane solution would not be to finish off Jews who are no longer fit for work by some fast-acting means. It would in any case be more pleasant than letting them starve to death,’ BA R 58/954. After viewing a mass shooting near Minsk on 15 Aug. 1941, Himmler explained in a speech to the assembled personnel of *Einsatzkommando* 8 that the state leadership was well aware that implementation of these measures imposed a moral strain on the men, but that the orders had to be carried out for ‘reasons of state’, statement by Bradfish, 2 Feb. 1962, quoted in Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen*, 181.

<sup>89</sup> Schrader, ‘Normen’, 621.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 621.

<sup>91</sup> File note re presence of chief engineer Prüfer of Topf & Sons, Erfurt, regarding expansion of the cremation facilities at Auschwitz POW camp, Bftgb.No. 12115/42/Er/Ha., repr. in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 298.

<sup>92</sup> Adler, *Der verwalte Mensch*, 577. On the complex border issues concerning Auschwitz, see Steinbacher, ‘Musterstadt Auschwitz’, 69–78.

even if Auschwitz was not reassigned from the 'racially less valuable' eastern strip of Upper Silesia to the 'racially valuable' western part of the Government District of Kattowitz (Katowice) until May 1941.<sup>93</sup> In taking this decision, the National Socialist leadership, for whom 'Germanification' and mass murder were two sides of the same coin, may have been counting on the 'ideological reliability' of the Germans to be moved into the area.<sup>94</sup> At all events Germans, particularly German officials, had been settling in Auschwitz since the spring of 1941, municipal authorities (residence registration office, railway office, social welfare office) had been established, the police force strengthened, administrative departments set up, and new senior administrative posts created.<sup>95</sup> Almost all the construction projects were promoted by Reich ministries, and municipal building in Auschwitz was given top priority, on a par with development of the IG Farben plant.<sup>96</sup>

On the other hand, in the summer of 1942 there were apparently still Jews in Upper Silesia who were greeted with a handshake by policemen on the street, were not beaten in public, and lived a restricted existence in the Jewish quarter, which had not yet been turned into a closed ghetto.<sup>97</sup> This understandably surprising fact raises the question: had it not been long taken for granted outside the Reich that Jews were not greeted and were beaten arbitrarily, were in any case only to be found in ghettos, and that the perpetrators in German war society acted towards them as members of a 'master race'? The answer is yes. But the ideological frontier drawn on the map of wartime Germany ran through the middle of Upper Silesia. For that reason, Jews in the *Altreich* areas of Silesia were subjected 'only' to the Jewish policy measures in force in the *Altreich*.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, for German war society, Auschwitz seems really to have lain outside the Reich. Anyone wishing to go there applied for service in the east, where, after the Polish campaign, the state attracted settlers with tax concessions and financial assistance, as well as the career prospects opened up by the confusion of responsibilities and the special constitutional status of the Government-General.

Rampant unscrupulousness and ruthless violence soon became hallmarks of the conduct of Germans in and around Auschwitz. Master-race behaviour, corruption, and a help-yourself mentality became the preferred means of their despotic rule.<sup>99</sup> Because of the continuing war, life in the east was perceived as a permanent state of emergency, in which initial victory euphoria alternated with hopes for secure forward-planning and, finally, with fear of defeat and the loss of territory and power. However, when Kurt Prüfer entered the office of the

<sup>93</sup> Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz', 240.

<sup>94</sup> On Germanization plans, see Dwork and Pelt, *Auschwitz*; Aly, *Final Solution*.

<sup>95</sup> Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz', 240.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 227–8.

<sup>97</sup> Browning, *Nazi Policy*, 142–50.

<sup>98</sup> Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz': 138 n. 178.

<sup>99</sup> Under the 'new logic', it seemed only logical that outside the Reich no laws should apply, career advancement should be quicker, and power could and should be exercised without any restraint.



Central Building Administration in Auschwitz on 19 August 1942, the escalating plans for a glorious German future based on the creation of a new human being in the east were still in the process of unrestrained expansion. The Wehrmacht was winning victories in Africa and the Soviet Union, the navy was sinking more enemy shipping than could be rebuilt, the Japanese allies were on the offensive, and the European vassal states were tying themselves, willingly or unwillingly, ever more closely to the hegemonic German regime, whose foreign ministry was now demanding outright that all European Jews be handed over to the Reich.<sup>100</sup> On the very day chief engineer Prüfer began his business dealings with death, a half-hearted British attempt at a landing in Dieppe failed,<sup>101</sup> thereby ensuring the Reich, both materially and psychologically, a long-term unchallenged monopoly of power in Europe. The meeting in the Central Building Administration in Auschwitz was chaired by SS-Unterscharführer Fritz Ertl, one of Auschwitz's architects. The others attending were SS-Unterscharführer Hans Kirschneck, Robert Köhler from the Köhler company in Mysłowice, and the aforesaid Kurt Prüfer from the firm of Topf & Sons in Erfurt.<sup>102</sup> These men settled the details of the construction of a further three crematoria and gas chambers in Birkenau.<sup>103</sup> Prüfer, who was entitled to 2 per cent of his company's profits, was to supply seven furnaces with a total of twenty-three muffles (combustion units) and supervise their installation.<sup>104</sup> Köhler won the order for the external furnace cladding and smokestacks.<sup>105</sup> The total incineration capacity of Auschwitz was thereby increased, as confirmed after completion by SS-Sturmbannführer Karl Bischoff, head of the Central Building Administration in Auschwitz, in a letter to the head of Section C 'Building & Construction' in the SS economic affairs and administration main office, SS-Obergruppenführer and Maj.-Gen. of the Waffen-SS Hans Kammler,<sup>106</sup> to at least 4,756 persons per twenty-four hours, or 142,680 corpses a month.<sup>107</sup> This 'knowledge of domination' was reported to the Reich, but the details were kept secret from the craftsmen who built the murder facilities. It was nevertheless no problem for the fitters Molik and Koch, who began work immediately on installation of the furnaces<sup>108</sup>—or for all the other craftsmen involved—to decipher the meaning of the 'bathing facilities for special operations' adjoining the crematoria, that is to say gas chambers.<sup>109</sup> The

<sup>100</sup> Browning, *The Final Solution*; Jersak, 'A Matter of Foreign Policy'.

<sup>101</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 360.

<sup>102</sup> Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation*, 98; *The Pelt Report*, 341.

<sup>103</sup> File notes Bftgb.[mail log] No. 12115/42/Er/Hn, 21 Aug. 1942, repr. in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 298.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.; see Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation*, 98.

<sup>105</sup> Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 298.

<sup>106</sup> Bischoff to Kammler, re construction of Crematorium III, 31550/Ja./Ne., 28 June 1943,

repr. in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 343.

<sup>107</sup> See discussion of incineration capacity in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 342–52.

<sup>108</sup> See File notes Bftgb.[mail log] No. 12115/42/Er/Hn, 21 Aug. 1942, repr. in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 298.

<sup>109</sup> See statement by Fritz Ertl, 21 Jan. 1972, Republic of Austria, Ministry of Justice, Case 20 Vr 3806/64 (Ertl/Dejaco), Regional Criminal Court of Vienna, ON 484, 120, quoted in Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Pelt Report*, expert opinion for the defence in the case of *Irving v. Lipstadt*, in 'Holocaust Denial on Trial' (19 Apr. 2004), URL: www.hdot.org, 341.



choice of the euphemism 'bathing facilities' was explained by an eye witness who described what happened when the chambers were opened after the gassing:

The members of the *Sonderkommando* ('special detail'), wearing rubber boots, surround the pile of corpses and wash it down with thick hoses. That is essential because death by drowning or gassing causes the bowels to empty as the body's last reaction. Every corpse is soiled. Once the "bathing" of the corpses is finished—a task which the *Sonderkommando* must carry out with utter self-abnegation and in extreme mental anguish—the separation of the intertwined corpses begins.<sup>110</sup>

Participation in the compartmentalized process of mass murder caused the suspension of normal feelings.

'In Auschwitz you could react humanly only for the first few hours. Once you had been there for a while, it was impossible to react normally.'<sup>111</sup> That applied to the perpetrators perhaps even more than to the victims, since the former mutated into murderers. 'The death factory rationalized killing, transforming it into labour that required no internal involvement—not even cold-bloodedness. All it asked for was one to be matter-of-fact, efficient and exacting.'<sup>112</sup> It is not clear how many people saw the gas-chamber murders with their own eyes, though it must have been more than testified after the war. What is clear, however, is that the whole of Auschwitz saw the Reichsführer SS on 17 July 1942, a month before Prüfer's arrival, when he visited the murder facilities in order to witness a gassing. As Himmler's BMW drew up, the camp orchestra played the triumphal march from Verdi's *Aida*. 'Himmler got out, smiling, obviously surprised and pleased by the music. He paused, listened for a moment, then strolled, chatting to Höß, towards our Block.'<sup>113</sup> Rudolf Vrba, who witnessed the scene as an inmate, tells of his relief at seeing the 'all-powerful ogre', whom he had imagined as an 'angry, ugly, bogeyman', move 'with the grace and easy charm of someone from English royalty, relaxing in an atmosphere that was as benevolent as that of any English garden party . . . For a moment our eyes met. They were cold, impersonal eyes, that seemed to see little; and yet I found myself thinking: "If he finds out what's going on here, maybe he'll improve things. Maybe the food will get better. Maybe there won't be any more beatings. Maybe . . . maybe we'll see some justice around here for a change."<sup>114</sup>

In the midst of inhumanity there was hope that the very people responsible for creating the situation would themselves improve it. Himmler's presence in Auschwitz, however, was followed not by better rations or the introduction of justice, but by Prüfer's visit in response to an order for more crematoria. That visit was also connected with Hitler's order to Himmler of 14 July 1942 to speed things up,<sup>115</sup> including exhumation of the corpses, which was

<sup>110</sup> Nyiszli, 'Todesfabrik', in *Zeugen sagen aus*, 259–60.

<sup>111</sup> Langbein, *Der Auschwitz-Prozess*, i. 138.

<sup>113</sup> Vrba and Bestic, *I Cannot Forgive*, 13.

<sup>112</sup> Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 264.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>115</sup> On the context of Hitler's order in July 1942 see Supplementary Note, IfZ, Fg 70.

just beginning: an eyewitness recorded that when the graves were opened the stench was sickening. Knee-deep in rotting flesh, whipped on by drunken SS men, and threatened with machine-guns, the prisoners were made to pull the disintegrating corpses out, mostly with their bare hands.<sup>116</sup>

None of the participants asked themselves how the murder could be prevented. Instead, they worked together to perfect death by murder. Doctors contributed by conducting murderous experiments, sadists revived the torture instruments of the Middle Ages,<sup>117</sup> supplemented by technical and structural innovations, and engineers devised death production lines. When Kurt Prüfer returned to Erfurt from Auschwitz and informed Topf & Sons' authorized agent, Fritz Sander, about the order for crematoria, Sander immediately designed a 'continuously operating crematorium for mass incineration', for which he filed a patent application on 4 November 1942.<sup>118</sup> The application described a double unit 'suitable for a crematorium block the size of Auschwitz', with an 'incineration capacity' of 3.6 million corpses a year.<sup>119</sup> For reasons of secrecy, Sander's patent application, which referred explicitly to furnaces installed 'hitherto in individual camps of this type', could not be approved during the war but only in the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>120</sup> Even before Prüfer could report to his superior about the trip to Auschwitz, the name 'Sander' cropped up in a note which Himmler had drafted for a meeting with Hitler.<sup>121</sup>

It may be noted in passing that the Führer himself was at this time part of German war society outside the Reich. He had had his forward HQ built in a forest near Vinnica, in the region of Kiev, from which he flew to the front on several occasions, but never to the extermination camps.<sup>122</sup> There were days, such as the day of Prüfer's visit to Auschwitz, when the whole murderous elite appears to have been outside the Reich. Himmler was on the way to see Globocnik in Lublin to settle details of the 'final solution',<sup>123</sup> and Goebbels was staying at Hitler's headquarters. Their private conference lasted several hours, but on this occasion Goebbels recorded not a word by Hitler about extermination of the Jews.<sup>124</sup> Everything seemed to have been said, and to have long been under way in the extermination camps.

On that or the following night, a man was travelling from one of those extermination camps on the night train from Warsaw to the Reich. For him, however, there was still a great deal left to say. In a later report, SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Gerstein, head of the Waffen-SS medical service's health technology department, where he was in charge of Zyklon B procurement, described a gassing he had witnessed in Belzec: 'The column starts to move. Led by a young girl, pretty

<sup>116</sup> Vrba and Bestic, *I Cannot Forgive*, 13.

<sup>117</sup> Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 226–8.

<sup>118</sup> Patent application T 58240 Kl. 24, 4 Nov. 1942; Giordano, *Wenn Hitler den Krieg gewonnen hätte*, 275–9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 279.

<sup>120</sup> Schwarzenberger, 'J. A. Topf & Söhne', 12.

<sup>121</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 518 (15 Aug. 1942).

<sup>122</sup> For Hitler's periods of residence at Führer HQs, see Seidler and Zeiger, *Die Führerhauptquartiere*, 350.

<sup>123</sup> Himmler, *Der Dienstkalender*, 523 (19 Aug. 1942).

<sup>124</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, v. 345–73 (20 Aug. 1942).

as a picture, they walk along the path, all naked, men, women, children, people without their artificial limbs . . . mothers with infants at their breasts, they climb the steps, hesitate, then enter the death chambers!<sup>125</sup> He also described a visit to Treblinka, during which 'Professor Pfannenstiehl [Pfannenstiel] made a big speech in which he explained to the men the usefulness of their task and the importance of their great mission. To me, he spoke of "very humane methods and the beauty of the work".'<sup>126</sup> Gerstein was still entirely under the impression of those visits when, during his overnight train journey, he reported the extermination of the Jews to a Swedish diplomat, Baron von Otter.<sup>127</sup> It can be proved that Kurt Gerstein conveyed the most precise information available so far about the murder of the European Jews to various agencies in the Reich: he informed leading members of the Protestant Church in Berlin, went to see the papal nuncio in that city, sought contact with the Dutch resistance movement, and informed friends and acquaintances.<sup>128</sup> His personal report stirred his listeners, but they kept quiet about it. The perpetrators in German war society had—especially in the extermination camps—become the very murderers, child rapists, thieves, and pimps whom Goebbels had invoked in his oblique comparison with the Jews.<sup>129</sup> In no few cases, the work whose 'beauty' had been praised by Professor Pfannenstiel was of a pornographic nature: 'Or Scharführer Forst. This one stood at the gate of the undressing room and felt the sexual organ of each young woman who was passing naked into the gas chamber. There were also cases when German SS men of all ranks put fingers into the sexual organs of pretty young girls.'<sup>130</sup>

The accumulation of power made possible by the Auschwitz system also allowed the perpetrators' instinctive urges to erupt and be vented on their victims. The perverse nature of the whole enterprise is expressed in the words with which NSDAP Kreisleiter Ernst Lanz solemnly celebrated 'German construction' in Auschwitz: 'Built by Germans, dirtied by Poles, and defiled by Jews, you Auschwitz, liberated by Adolf Hitler, are called upon to be the herald of German greatness in the east of the Reich.'<sup>131</sup>

In so far as 'German construction' referred to the Birkenau extermination camp, many other private companies, in addition to the firms Topf and Köhler already mentioned, put their special skills to work in the service of the 'final solution' and earned money from it: Vedag insulated the gas chambers, Kontinentale Wasserwerks-Gesellschaft, Falck, and Triton installed the drainage, Segnitz supplied part of the roofing, which was erected by Industrie-Bau-AG, Riedel did the masonry work for the crematoria, Kluge helped install the furnaces, and AEG<sup>132</sup> supplied the electrics.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>125</sup> 'Gerstein Report', 4 May 1945, LKA Bielefeld, 5, 2 NS No. 31.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Otter's report on his meeting with Gerstein is reprinted in Friedländer, *Counterfeit Nazi*, 122–4.

<sup>129</sup> Goebbels, *Das eherne Herz*, 87.

<sup>128</sup> Schäfer, *Kurt Gerstein*, 166–9.

<sup>130</sup> *Amidst a Nightmare of Crime*, 184.

<sup>131</sup> *Oberschlesische Zeitung*, 9 June 1944, quoted in Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt Auschwitz', 234.

<sup>132</sup> Repr. in Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz*, 330.

<sup>133</sup> Dwork and Pelt, *Auschwitz*, 318.

Birkenau was built not by anonymous firms, but by thinking, technically skilled craftsmen. 'The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence,' as none other than Martin Heidegger wrote.<sup>134</sup> While he had the essence of technology in mind, it was the essential nature of human beings that was increasingly laid bare in the camp society of Auschwitz.

In Auschwitz the will to do evil became visible. Knowledge of evil was unable to break the will to participate in it, though that will was almost concealed as such in many cases. No good can come of Auschwitz. Anyone who—in the perverted logic of National Socialism—sought good from it at the time, had to do so in secret. It was known that nothing good was going on in Auschwitz, so although the evil could not be concealed because of the belching chimneys and the stench that could smelt miles away, it had to be kept secret. But forced secrecy that cannot conceal the obvious is a lie. Auschwitz is revealed as a lie precisely by the fact that all knowledge of the evil from which no good could come had to be prevented—which was impossible. Thus the lie of Auschwitz became the lie of German society, whereby secret knowledge of secret evil was passed off as ignorance.

### 3. GERMAN WAR SOCIETY INSIDE THE REICH, AND THE HOLOCAUST

#### (a) *Removal of the Jews by Deportation*

As the third year of the war began, on 1 September 1941, the hopes and wishes of many Germans had not been fulfilled. Believing the propaganda about a rapid victory in the east, they had hoped for the return of their husbands, fathers, and sons before the winter, and for the long-promised peace.<sup>135</sup> Instead of which, on the third anniversary of the war German Jews were marked with a yellow star.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, Hitler's prophecy suddenly reappeared in the propaganda, blazoned on the NSDAP's weekly quotation poster in every town and village: 'Should the international Jewish financiers succeed once again in plunging the nations into a world war, the result will not be the victory of the Jews but the the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'<sup>137</sup> These were the only signs, visible to all but none too clear, of a change in Hitler's strategy.

Imposition of the yellow star, and the 'evacuation' of Jews 'to the east' that began shortly afterwards, were ordered by Hitler personally,<sup>138</sup> although the fact was not made public. German war society was confronted with police

<sup>134</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> See *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, viii.

<sup>136</sup> Police ordinance of 1 Sept. 1941, repr. in *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat*, 347.

<sup>137</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, pl. 45 between pp. 546–7.

<sup>138</sup> Himmler to Greiser, 18 Sept. 1941, BA, repr. in *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden*, 157; on the issuing of Hitler's order, see 'Irving-Prozeß', IfZ, Fg 70.

ordinances, not Führer orders.<sup>139</sup> The size and proportions of the star, and the place on the clothing where it was to be affixed, were laid down in detail in implementing regulations that transformed Jews on their way to death into administered, second-class human beings.

Extinction of the miserable remains of civil existence still permitted to Jews living in the Reich was planned thoroughly and implemented bureaucratically. From October 1941 Jews were required to report to assembly points after complying with a series of legal procedures needed to permit their own 'evacuation'. They were to leave their apartments 'in a clean and tidy condition' with all gas, electricity, and water bills paid, draw up a full inventory of their possessions, and, to disguise the real purpose of their evacuation, bring with them the objects they thought necessary for 'resettlement in the east'. The death in store for them was regulated, in a supposedly legal manner, by dozens of leaflets, instructions, forms, and notices. Their own signature on a declaration countersigned by a criminal police inspector attested to 'evacuation', a bailiff's writ confirmed the retroactive confiscation of all property,<sup>140</sup> and evacuation numbers and leaflets specifying permitted luggage prepared the German Jews for their unknown journey to extermination. The local Gestapo authorities, instructed to maintain secrecy, were prepared for all eventualities, as can be seen from the 'Instructions on material to be prepared' for carrying out the deportation issued by the Nuremberg Gestapo. The following material was prescribed:

Portable typewriters, writing paper, carbon paper, rubber stamps for identity cards, seals, candles, and tags for sealing apartments (lead-sealing pliers for secure closure), envelopes, wrapping paper for storing confiscated objects, jewellery, foreign currency, etc., emergency lighting for guard units, barriers, where appropriate, for sealing off access streets, trucks to transport the sick and persons taken into custody, stretchers in case of accidents, emergency telephone links to base, state police post to take photographs, supply rations to accompanying guard unit, indemnify the SS, supply rations to the Jews.<sup>141</sup>

Only the German perpetrators knew exactly what was going on; the German victims lived with the dreadful certainty of deportation in an atmosphere of terror and uncertainty that has been preserved in the diary entries of Ruth Andreas-Friedrich:

19 September 1941: It's here. As of today the Jews are outlawed, marked as outlaws by a yellow Star of David that each one must wear on the left chest. . . . Every night the cars go through town, taking them away, between sundown and sunup. Every night new fugitives are camping out on the sofas of their Aryan friends. 'If you aren't at home they go away, Everything's all right if you aren't at home,' says Mrs Rosenthal, and her teeth chatter with horror. Sometimes the business of 'not

<sup>139</sup> Police ordinance of 1 Sept. 1941, repr. in *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat*, 347; priority letter from chief of regular police, Kurt Daluege, to all local police authorities, 24 Oct. 1941, IMT, xxxiii. 535-6.

<sup>140</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 363.

<sup>141</sup> 'Nuremberg Gestapo: Instructions on material to be prepared', quoted in Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 362.

being at home' works; more often it doesn't. More than one person is picked up on the street, or taken away from work. No one knows the rules by which people are carried off. This man is caught; that man is unmolested. Why? By what prerogative? 'We'll all have our turn,' sigh those that are left. 'What's the difference whether it comes a month sooner or a month later?' 6 December 1941: 'If you aren't at home they go away,' Mrs Rosenthal said. 'Everything's all right if you aren't at home.' But some time or other you have to be at home. You can't be forever sleeping on strange sofas, aimlessly walking the streets, or sitting in stuffy movies. Once in a while you have to look after the flowers at home, the laundry, you have to. . . Now and then everyone needs the feeling he is not homeless. 8 December 1941: 'The one on the second floor? The Jewess, you mean?' says the concierge. 'They came and took her away. Day before yesterday. Oh, along about six.' So she's gone! Crushed, we start home. 24 December 1941: The ghetto at Landshut is where they took her—her and her fellow sufferers. Her first letter arrived today, on Christmas Eve. 'Send us something to eat, we are starving,' it says. 'I cry all day.'<sup>142</sup>

Inside the Reich it became increasingly clear that Jews had to be hidden if they were to be saved. During a relatively short period in autumn 1941 thousands of German fellow-citizens of the Jewish faith were 'evacuated' from the Reich just as publicly as they were murdered outside it. In two waves of deportation, from 15 October to 8 November 1941 and from 8 November 1941 to 6 February 1942, some 58,000 people were deported, in a total of fifty-seven transports, from railway stations in Berlin, Breslau (Wrocław), Brunn (Brno), Cologne, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt-on-Main, Hamburg, Hanover, Kassel, Leipzig, Luxembourg, Münster, Nuremberg, Prague, Stuttgart, Theresienstadt, and Vienna.<sup>143</sup> During the same period, the new course of 'Jewish policy' was made public. Goebbels's article 'The Jews are to blame!' in *Das Reich* of 16 November 1941 was reprinted, in one form or other, in many local newspapers.<sup>144</sup>

The third and fourth waves of deportation from the Reich, which began between March and June 1942,<sup>145</sup> were again backed up by articles in the press. On 19 March 1942 an article in *Der Stürmer*, entitled 'The coming end—the Führer's prophecy', stated quite openly that, in accordance with Hitler's prophecy, the Jews would be exterminated during the war:

How this solution will come about was made clear to the whole non-Jewish world by the Führer of the German People in a proclamation to the peoples of Europe read out on 24 February 1942: 'Today the ideas of our National Socialist and the fascist revolution have conquered great and powerful states, and my prophecy will be fulfilled that through this war the Jews, not Aryan mankind, will be annihilated.'<sup>146</sup>

The deportations from the Reich, such as that from the Killesberg in Stuttgart on 22 August 1942,<sup>147</sup> were now so public that we even have films of

<sup>142</sup> Andreas-Friedrich, *Battleground Berlin*, 73–4.

<sup>143</sup> Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 449; see tables, *ibid.* 705–6.

<sup>144</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 63.

<sup>145</sup> Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, 485–6.

<sup>146</sup> 'Das kommende Ende – des Führers Prophezeiung', *Der Stürmer*, 19 Mar. 1942.

<sup>147</sup> See Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 359.



them.<sup>148</sup> At any rate, a few people, such as Hilde Miekley in Berlin, dared to follow a column of deported Jews to the railway station:

Suddenly, from a side street, a column of middle-aged people started to move . . . They were in rows of five or six, each carrying an orange-coloured paper bag. I heard later that the bags contained the last loaves of bread which the Jewish communal authorities had been allowed to give to them to take on the journey. There were police in front, behind, and on both sides. Alfred was the last in a row, right next to the pavement. His sister Grete, in tears, walked next to him. Sadly I have to say that many people stood in the doorways voicing their pleasure as the wretched column went by. 'Just look at those cheeky Jews!' someone shouted. 'They're laughing now, but their last hour has come.'<sup>149</sup>

The unclear knowledge of the fate of the Jews seemed clear enough. Along with the Jews themselves, questions about the Jews also vanished from the Reich. 'The deported Jews now remained only in the propaganda and mythology of National Socialism. They had been removed from reality. The truth about the Jews, their needs and grievances, anything that showed them in a human light and opposed the mythology and official propaganda, was not tolerated.'<sup>150</sup>

*(b) Absence of the Jews as Absence of the Jewish Question? Absence, Mourning, and Normality in Wartime*

The absence of the Jews must have created a great vacuum. From 1942 onwards German war society inside the Reich lacked a central point of reference. For twenty years the NSDAP had blamed the Jews for everything. Since 1933 the state had been combating the Jews in every imaginable way, restricting, humiliating, and robbing them. Now they were suddenly not there. Strangely, the sins did not disappear with the scapegoats. Stalingrad, at least, could not be blamed on 'the Jews'. Hitler may well have known why he had so particularly wanted to postpone the 'final solution' till after the war. With the removal of its object, the 'final solution' disappeared as an eschatologically necessary ingredient in the explanation of the state of non-peace, and with it the promise of peace itself. In the face of harsh facts, the absent Jews were no longer available for specific blame or visible exclusion. What is more, the absence of the Jews encouraged speculation about their fate. As Hermann Samter wrote on 26 January 1942:

Not one of the thousand people who supposedly travelled to Kaunas on 17 November has every written. This has given rise to a widespread rumour that they were shot on the way or otherwise murdered. Naturally, all this does little to hearten those marked down for evacuation. There is a huge increase in suicides.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>148</sup> There is a film of the deportation of Jews from Killesberg, Stuttgart, in Gienger, Hirschfeld, and Jersak, *Nationalsozialismus* (interactive CD-ROM).

<sup>149</sup> Account by Hilde Miekley, repr. in *Wir haben es gesehen*, 300.

<sup>150</sup> Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 468.

<sup>151</sup> Letter from Hermann Samter, 26 Jan. 1942, repr. in *Wir haben es gesehen*, 297.



Amazingly, persistent enquiries into the fate of Jewish friends and neighbours were very rare. Letters to Łódź came back stamped 'no postal deliveries to this street at the present time', money orders disappeared without trace, and people refrained from making specific enquiries of the authorities. Typhus was suspected as the reason why letters were not delivered, and the rumours were believed.<sup>152</sup> Ignorance combined with suspicion of the truth, and both were systemic. In addition, there was the fear of reprisals. Who was prepared to be identified as a 'Jew-lover' by repeatedly enquiring after the fate of his Jewish neighbours? After the war, only a few, like Christel Beilmann, criticized their own attitude:

We knew, and saw, that people were being deported with whom we had lived together peacefully, though with prejudices ('dirty Jews: cut-throats; Polack woman: Polish business; the gypsies are coming: keep the children clean'). They were gone, out of sight. We didn't wonder about their long rail journeys. They had vanished into the darkness. There was no news of them. Nor was it a good idea to talk about them. There were more and more bad rumours about conditions in the camps. It was better not to believe them. To try and find out whether they were true was beyond our moral and intellectual abilities.<sup>153</sup>

On the other hand, anyone who discovered more through his own connections had every reason to keep quiet, since acquisition of knowledge was itself grounds for prosecution. The process was accompanied by adjustments to the language. 'Evacuation' had now to be referred to as 'emigration', as if the Jews had left of their own accord.<sup>154</sup>

It seems to have occurred to no one to mourn for, not to say with, the Jews, although it was a commonplace that a sad fate awaited them. Participation and sorrow were obliterated by fear and lies. Fear that something terrible was happening to the Jews was plastered over with the lie that they had deserved it. Out of fear, people refrained from enquiring about absent Jews or pre-empted their own enquiries with lies. On more than one occasion, Goebbels confided the truth about extermination of the Jews to his diary: 'In the Government-General the Jews are now being driven to the east, starting with Lublin. A rather barbaric method, not to be described in detail, is being used, and very little remains of the Jews themselves.'<sup>155</sup>

Anyone in the Reich could understand that contact with Jews was not 'normal', and the war was invoked as the reason why the norms had shifted in this respect. Here, for example, is what Hilde Miekley was told when she made enquiries of the director of a factory in which a Jew summoned to report for 'evacuation' had worked till the previous day: 'I don't know what you're getting so excited about, anyway. There's a war on, you know. The Jews are being called on to do their bit. They have to dig trenches, and so on.'<sup>156</sup> Fear

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> *Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat*, iii. 258–9.

<sup>154</sup> Statement by Max Plaut in uni-hamburg.de (13 July 2004), URL: [www.rz.uni-hamburg.de/rz3a035/moorweiden1.html](http://www.rz.uni-hamburg.de/rz3a035/moorweiden1.html).

<sup>155</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iii. 561 (27 Mar. 1942).

<sup>156</sup> *Wir haben es gesehen*, 299.

of the truth facilitated the lie. At the same time, the lie afforded a certain state-guaranteed space for personal atrocities. Knowing the Jews had been removed once and for all, individuals could shamelessly enrich themselves on the Jewish property left behind, provided it had not been seized by the state, without fear of prosecution even if they lied—about the fate of the Jews and about their own enrichment.

Nevertheless, although the lie about the fate of the Jews suppressed the question of their absence, it was unable to prevent the forceful return of that question to the Reich along with the war.

*(c) The War Penetrates into the Reich, and the Jewish Question Returns*

Roughly speaking, there were four areas in which the war was brought into the Reich, accompanied increasingly by the question of the absent Jews. Penetration of the war into the Reich in the form of the Allied bombing campaign raised the question of 'Jewish retaliation',<sup>157</sup> which was stirred up by official propaganda; the growing number of foreign workers in the Reich raised the question of (the absence of) Jewish labour;<sup>158</sup> letters home from the armed forces<sup>159</sup> carried reports of the extermination of Jews back into the Reich; and soldiers on home leave filled in specific details.<sup>160</sup>

The flickering rumours were frequently linked with moral certainty, but only strengthened the web of fear and lies. 'If we have to pay for what we are doing to the local population, then God help us,'<sup>161</sup> was a frequently expressed sentiment, fuelled by increasing fear that the war might not be won after all. The Reich press chief, SS-Obergruppenführer Otto Dietrich, instructed German journalists to take the offensive: 'Don't say: there's no way we can lose the war. Say rather: we have to win the war, because we must not lose it.'<sup>162</sup> An instruction from the official press service explained:

Propaganda against *Jewry* is just as important as our anti-Bolshevik propaganda. Each member of the *Volksgemeinschaft* must be irrevocably convinced that the Jews are the merciless enemies of our people and are behind both Bolshevism and the plutocracies . . . Treatment of this subject falls within the framework of the stimulation of hatred which we recently described as necessary.<sup>163</sup>

Outside the Reich, by August 1942 at the latest, 'almost all Germans . . . had fairly accurate knowledge of the mass murders' and were to some extent informed in advance of impending 'Jewish operations', while the victims, like the members of Lvov's Jewish Council, already had their death certificates in their pockets, with only the date missing.<sup>164</sup> Inside the Reich, however,

<sup>157</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 5431, 5449.

<sup>158</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*.

<sup>159</sup> *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung*.

<sup>160</sup> From the diary of Karl Dürkefeldens, repr. in *Kain, wo ist dein Bruder?*, 141.

<sup>161</sup> *Wer die Zeit nicht miterlebt hat*, iii. 265.

<sup>162</sup> Reich press chief Dietrich to German journalists at a German press meeting on war work held in Berlin on 17 Jan. 1943 *Echolot*, ii. 97.

<sup>163</sup> Press service instruction of 2 Apr. 1943, repr. in *Wir haben es gesehen*, 281.

<sup>164</sup> Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien*, 313.

information about extermination of the Jews was crudely linked with propaganda about Jewish guilt:

On Saturday, 6 June 1942, my brother-in-law Walter came to see me. He was a foreman in Kiev when they were building a bridge over the Dnieper . . . The Ukrainians had to dig a trench 150 metres from the factory building. About five metres long, 2.5 metres wide, and a good 2 metres deep . . . The Jews were then taken out six at a time and stood in the trench . . . 'Did you see this yourself?' I asked Walter. Answer: 'I was standing 20 metres away.' . . . This evening, 12 June 1942, shortly before 8, there was a speech on the radio saying the Jews in Europe, and perhaps even in more distant countries, were being exterminated. It also said the Jews were to blame for the present heavy British air raids on cities in the north and west of Germany.<sup>165</sup>

The connection between the fate of the Jews, which was mostly deliberately left vague, and the Allied air raids on German cities was increasingly made by the population itself. After the air raid on Cologne on 30 May 1942, the SD's public mood report noted: 'Some people are also connecting the bombing of Cologne cathedral and other German churches with the destruction of synagogues in Germany.'<sup>166</sup> Occasionally, metaphysical doubts were expressed about the rightness of the German cause: 'God would not allow such a thing if we had right on our side and were fighting for a just cause.'<sup>167</sup> Yet while the Allied bombers were bringing the war, and the question of the fate of the Jews, deep into the country from the west, the answer was coming from the east unasked—in letters from the troops intoning, like a magic spell, the struggle of the Aryans against the Jews:

What counts for us is to win Europe and inflict a great defeat on our enemies. But the fundamental issue is the position of world Jewry, which opposes our solution of the Jewish question with the annihilation of the German people. It has become a 'war of ideologies', and a very radical one, that can end only in the total annihilation of one side or the other . . .<sup>168</sup>

The idea that the war had to be won come what may was intoned repeatedly, but the tone changed over time:

- at first confident (1942): 'That we shall win the war is beyond doubt. This is a struggle between two major ideologies. It's either us or the Jews. We must and shall win this war';<sup>169</sup>
- then threatening (1943): 'Under no circumstances must this war be lost! What would happen then? At all events, Germany would not exist if we lost [. . .] It is impossible that the Jew should win and rule';<sup>170</sup>

<sup>165</sup> From the diary of Karl Dürkefeldens, repr. in *Kain, wo ist dein Bruder?*, 141.

<sup>166</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 5449.

<sup>168</sup> Second-lt. K.N., 2. Bttr/Heeres-Küsten-Art.Abt. 149, 24 Feb. 1942, repr. in *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung*, 52.

<sup>169</sup> Lance-cpl. A.G., Kurierstaffel des Führers, Roslawl, 1 Mar. 1942, repr. *ibid.* 52.

<sup>170</sup> Sgt. A.N., Fl.H.Kdtr.(A) 221/XII, Lyons, 29 May 1943, repr. *ibid.* 69.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

- and finally resigned (1944): 'Could the war be lost after all? That would be dreadful, and you would have to doubt Providence. We Germans have never been criminals, even if the Nazis went a bit crazy with the Jews.'<sup>171</sup>

During the air raids of 1943, before resignation set in, Germans in the Reich discussed drastic retaliation against the British, Americans, and Jews. 'Retaliation with gas, gas as a means of mass destruction, was widely discussed in 1943. Rage at the British and Americans reached boiling point. Even Christians swore the whole brood should be eradicated root and branch.'<sup>172</sup> Lust for revenge, and expectations of great retaliation, were again stirred up by official propaganda.<sup>173</sup> But there was a kind of logic to them, since the Allied air raids were perceived as retaliation.

Nevertheless, the general feeling in 1943 was that Germany was being struck by Jewish vengeance. People wondered why some cities had been left out, and the inhabitants of Nuremberg discovered that Fürth and Frankfurt had been spared because they were Jewish towns . . . There were secret links between the deportations and the bombings. Had the Jews been left in the cities and ghettos as hostages, they would not have been bombed. The idea took root in the mob and among the intelligentsia. Jewish vengeance was on the agenda.<sup>174</sup>

The few people who publicly placed war and mass murder in their proper relationship were silenced for ever by the state. Wilhelm Lehmann, a 74-year-old retired invalid, was denounced after writing on a wall on the Marienplatz in Berlin: "Hitler, you mass murderer, you must be murdered yourself for the war to end." Asking the Reich justice minister for the death penalty, the chief Reich prosecutor at the people's court seems to have been thoroughly versed in the state lies: 'The crime of which the accused has been found guilty threatened the person of the Führer and endangered the German people so seriously that, although the court has invoked the possibility of diminished responsibility, it seems to me the sentence must be carried out.'<sup>175</sup> With state terror helping to suppress the truth, the state-directed propaganda ensured that German war society inside the Reich was possessed, until its downfall, by fear of its own victims. After a daytime air raid on Berlin, one of the few Jewish girls remaining in the city was spotted wandering the streets and immediately taken to task as the guilty party:

I had to run through the yards of burning houses, when I ran past one crowd of people, they began yelling 'There goes a Jew-girl! This is all their fault.' The headlines they had read in the newspapers began to have an effect. The people picked up stones and gravel, and threw them at me.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Sgt. L.D., 7. Bttr./Pz.Art.Rgt 103, 4. Pz.Div, 4 Sept. 1944, repr. *ibid.* 77.

<sup>172</sup> Friedrich, *Das Gesetz des Krieges*, 166–7.

<sup>173</sup> Hans Schwarz van Berk, 'Die ungeahnten Folgen', *Das Reich*, 2 July 1943, 4.

<sup>174</sup> Friedrich, *Das Gesetz des Krieges*, 167.

<sup>175</sup> Kain, *wo ist dein Bruder?*, 198.

<sup>176</sup> Lilo Clemens, b. 1928, quoted in *Voices from the Third Reich*, 222.

#### 4. THE HOLOCAUST BECOMES KNOWN: WAR IN THE REICH AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE WAR

It was not long before the new logic of Jewish guilt paled in the face of the real truth, which was steadily gaining ground, only to be blotted out once again by the flames of the burning German cities, concern for one's own property, and fear for one's life. 'Knowing that all means of defence and retaliation were of no avail, the fighter-planes destroyed, the anti-aircraft guns unmanned or removed . . . the Germans entered the fiery glare of the air war of the last eight months.'<sup>177</sup> The few letters from the troops that found their way from the fast approaching front to letterboxes that were still intact, and were read in the quiet of the countryside or scanned quickly in large cities before the next air-raid warning, promised further terrors:

Yesterday I came across a Russian leaflet addressed to the Russian troops . . . Soldiers of the Red Army, seize the spoils of war, the German women and girls! Enjoy the smell of their flesh and pleasure of their sex. Then revel in murdering the fascists. Seize the blonde German women, and smash that German arrogance!<sup>178</sup>

The truth about the extermination of the Jews outweighed the dread of more immediate horrors, to become self-accusation. In October 1944 a non-commissioned officer wrote home:

The treatment of Jews and Poles—the former already before the war, and both groups during it—was not only a fatal political error but a human injustice that weighs increasingly on the conscience of the German people. This is the source of the deeply ingrained distrust with which even a simple man with a remnant of common sense greets our claim of the 'just war' and the 'holy cause'.<sup>179</sup>

Thousands of refugees streaming from the east into the ever-shrinking Reich knew about the atrocity of the extermination of the Jews, but their own suffering overcame their ability to communicate. Who, seeing his own fate, was also prepared to admit guilt of his own? Since the beginning of 1943 the leadership had faced up to the clear possibility of defeat if extermination of the Jews did not create the conditions for victory: 'He [the Führer] prefers the battle of Salamis to an indecisive skirmish and, since Jewish hatred is so enormous anyway, would rather burn all his bridges. Having solved the Jewish question, Germany can count on a united people without opposition.'<sup>180</sup> And indeed, German war society did not succeed in rebelling against its own government even when facing defeat. The burden of the lie prevented the self-imposed veil over the truth from ripping apart with the system. Even in collapse, German war society was still divided into 'Germans' and 'Nazis'. As in the case of the

<sup>177</sup> Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 489–90.

<sup>178</sup> Capt. H.G.E., Stab/Pz.Aufkl.Abt. 12, 12. Pz.Div, 17 Sept. 1944, repr. in *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung*, 78.

<sup>179</sup> Cpl. H., Stab/Beob.Abt 71, 15 Oct. 1944, repr. *ibid.* 79.

<sup>180</sup> Minutes of conversation between the Führer and Marshal Antonescu in Schloß Kießheim on 13 Apr. 1943, repr. in *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, ii. 228–30, here 230.

20 July conspirators, a revolt against the leadership would also have been an admission of guilt. In view of the unimaginable murder of the Jews, appeals to the moral core of the German people, like the one contained in the NCO's letter quoted above, sounded like unmasking oneself. In the autumn of 1944 they were already sowing the seeds of future legends:

Despite ten years of indoctrination and all proof to the contrary, the German people remained in their overwhelming majority a morally sensitive society! A satanic art of seduction, and a refined system of mass intoxication and national agitation, were needed to incite it to do what it did or tolerated, and which, in the moment of disaster, it now recognizes with horror. The feeling of human right and wrong is still deeply anchored in its best members. The German has always been very much a man of conscience. Conscience has set his limits and served as his yardstick for measuring reality.<sup>181</sup>

Thus even on the brink of collapse, in the very midst of defeat, the repulsive lie won out. Germans were good—the Nazis had been bad. Pre-emptive definition of the past paved the way for a future in which the question of guilt could already be considered as settled.

<sup>181</sup> Cpl. H., Stab/Beob.Abt 71, 15 Oct. 1944, repr. in *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung*, 79.

## IV. Normality of the Unimaginable: War within the War

SEEN from this perspective, Germany was not a people of murderers but a people of liars. Anyone who wanted to kill Jews and was not an eliminationist anti-Semite<sup>1</sup>—and who could suppose most Germans to be eliminationist anti-Semites?—had to lie, both to himself and to his unit. In addition to those who murdered out of conviction and commitment, there was a whole series of German murderers, whose number is not to be underestimated, for whom the act itself was a lie. Murderers usually display both plan and intent, and few of the perpetrators would have murdered their Jewish neighbours on an impulse of their own. The mixture of pressure to conform and the will to evil generated, at most, sufficient intent; it rarely supplied the necessary independent plan to murder Jews. The individual's initial suspicion that he was not thinking correctly in the context of the new logic led straight to the lie of attempted compliance with a norm that was not normal. This applied not only to the (relatively few) murderers, but to German war society as a whole, including the Jewish victims in its midst. Under the new logic German bureaucracy was adjusted to the persecution and extermination of the Jews, and in most cases doubt about the rightness of the means was experienced as self-doubt—before being overtaken by the new normality. In creating a state of anxiety about the fear of terror, the National Socialist terror system lent the new logic enormous weight.

Living a lie was normality in German war society. It affected all those parents and wives who concealed grief at the loss of sons and husbands under a veil of heroism. It affected those who collaborated in the inhuman treatment of their Jewish fellow-citizens while actually believing them to be fellow-human beings (the lie as deed), and equally those who secretly helped Jews while denying it to the outside world (the lie as word). Only a few beacons of truth, such as Count Clemens von Galen and Paul Schneider, rose above the sea of liars.

For that very reason, the relation to the war after it ended was also mendacious: the truth about the war within the war emerged only slowly and still cannot be considered as finally established. During the territorial war, both inside the German Reich and, all the more so, outside it, it was impossible to close one's eyes and ears to the fact that Germany was engaged in a racial war against the Jews of Europe. The lie was already present in the oft-repeated remark, which seemingly referred only to the territorial war and yet cynically included extermination of the Jews, that we were after all 'at war'.

<sup>1</sup> Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.



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## E. Wartime Daily Life and the Air War on the Home Front

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### I. The Bombing War Seen as a Historical Event

HARDLY any other event brought the German population so directly and lastingly face to face with war and destruction as the bombing war from 1939 to 1945. The expression ‘the home front’, used regularly here in the context of daily life during the war and under the Allied air raids, was not coined during the Second World War; already in the 1914–18 war the phrase had served—not only in Germany but in Britain and the United States of America as well—as a synonym for the ‘hinterland’ behind the ‘fighting front’, embracing the everyday life of the nation’s population and its industry geared to the waging of the war.<sup>1</sup> In Germany between 1939 and 1945 the home front was however closely bound up, through ideology and propaganda, with the National Socialist concept of a closed and classless *Volksgemeinschaft*,<sup>2</sup> that—bound ‘by destiny’ to its leadership—was expected to face the Allied air war with its morale unshaken.<sup>3</sup> The weight of the Allied air raids thus fell equally on the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, local NSDAP officials, and ordinary *Volksgenossen*, as well as on the foreign workers who had been brought in from their home countries for ‘work deployment’—*Arbeitseinsatz*—in the Reich.<sup>4</sup> The separation from relatives through death, war service, and evacuation represented a physical and psychological burden that became heavier as the bombing grew more intense from 1943 on; the loss of the social, and not least the familial, environment was the prime feature of everyday life in wartime as the individual person experienced it.<sup>5</sup> In the spring of 1945 the ruins of the cities, as symbols of the collapse, made the final military defeat and the disintegration of the Nazi regime inescapably obvious.

<sup>1</sup> A basic work on this is the *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*; see also *Erster Weltkrieg – Zweiter Weltkrieg; Home Front*; Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade*; O’Brien, *Home Front War*.

<sup>2</sup> See Hancock, *National Socialist Leadership*, 192–3. The idea of a ‘national community’ precedes ideologies and goes back to the First World War, see Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft*.

<sup>3</sup> On the home front see also Beck, *Under the Bombs*.

<sup>4</sup> See on this the chapters by Karola Fings in the present volume and Mark Spoerer in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>5</sup> For a definition see Knoch, *Kriegsalltag*.

From 1942, daily life 'under the bombs' became more and more difficult.<sup>6</sup> Relatively adequate food supplies were, it is true, assured up to 1944/5 at least for the German population.<sup>7</sup> This however was thanks less to Germany's own resources than to ruthless exploiting of the parts of Europe that were under Reich occupation up to 1944.<sup>8</sup> From 1942 practically all aspects of day-to-day existence and of political and economic life were marked by the effects—and the coping with them—of the Allied bombing.<sup>9</sup> On top of this there were shortcomings in air-raid protection for civilians; a programme for building 'bombproof' shelters (the 'Führer's top-priority programme') had for instance already petered out two years on when the raw materials and labour needed for it were no longer available. A plan for providing short-term accommodation for those bombed out of their homes (the 'temporary homes programme') was quite incapable of meeting the need created by the air raids. The mass evacuations from regions under threat of air attack that began in summer 1943, such as the expanded children's evacuation scheme (the KLV), together with the 'measures for mobilization for total war' introduced in the following year, placed a further burden on the population.<sup>10</sup>

The denouement amid rubble and ruins was for those on the home front a development that began in 1939/40 with the German blitzkrieg campaigns and ended in the spring of 1945 with a collapse without parallel. The horrific material damage and loss of life caused by the air raids however resulted, among the German population, more in self-pity than in any insight into the political or military reasons that had led to the bombing.<sup>11</sup> To that extent the notion firmly espoused particularly among those in charge of the British air offensive, that of 'morale bombing', was a failure. Up to the autumn of 1944, at least, the destruction of their homes and death of their loved ones mostly produced among those affected only occasional criticism of the Nazi regime.<sup>12</sup> Instead the view was already held in the air-raid bunkers and tunnels in 1944/5 that for Germany, because of the Allied material superiority and the unending bombing with the terrible results being experienced, the war was being lost.<sup>13</sup> In the years after the war it was, among other things, the feeling that the German population had, especially through suffering the air raids, fleeing their homes, and being driven out, 'paid a high enough

<sup>6</sup> See for example the following regional studies focused on everyday life: Bergander, *Dresden*; Beer, *Kriegsalltag*; Ueberschär, *Freiburg*; Dortmund: *Bombenkrieg*; Horn, *Leipzig*.

<sup>7</sup> On this see, essentially. *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 515–36.

<sup>8</sup> See at length *ibid.* 181–211; also Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord*, 169–70, 211–12, 245–6.

<sup>9</sup> See Mierzejewski, *Bomben*; Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*, iii. 3; Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 93–7; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II (chapters by Müller).

<sup>10</sup> See the chapters by Armin Nolzen in the present volume.

<sup>11</sup> See Stargardt, 'Opfer der Bomben'.

<sup>12</sup> See, as a contemporary source, USSBS-Report No. 64b: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale, i. 17, NA, RG 243:64.

<sup>13</sup> See the 'public mood reports' in *Das letzte halbe Jahr*.

price'<sup>14</sup> that determined the 'coming to terms with the past',<sup>15</sup> as well as the arguments over de-nazification, war crimes, and the Nazi era.

In the weeks that followed the German capitulation on 8 May 1945 the 8th United States Army Air Force, from its bases in Britain, ran what became known as 'trolley runs'; these round-trip flights, comparable to sightseeing tours, were used to give ground crews a view of the bomb damage that had been caused in Europe and the German Reich.<sup>16</sup> The troops flew over areas that looked more like a lunar landscape or the ruined cities of antiquity than communities lived in by people. Yet in the shattered German towns political and social life was, by this time, getting under way again. People were beginning to bring fresh order to a daily life that for years had been shaped by air-raid warnings and bombing, and to make plans for the future.<sup>17</sup> The vast extent of the destruction and considerable loss of dwelling space presented a pressing problem for the reconstruction effort that began soon after the end of hostilities and was driven hard from 1948 on.<sup>18</sup> The population had to make do with what was left over after the war. The surface air-raid bunkers and the barrack camps that had been put up to house forced labourers were still in the early 1950s in use as make-do accommodation for the homeless and refugees. Reconstruction and town planning, on the other hand, had an earlier history to call on; the foundations had already been laid between autumn 1943 and spring 1945 by the 'reconstruction staff' set up by Albert Speer, which included building departments and architects in the various cities.<sup>19</sup>

After 1949, the experiences of war on the home front and the victims of the bombing formed, in both German states, part of public memory and memorial. At the same time the Allied air raids served to align the East German and West German states, in both politics and social culture, with their respective power blocs.<sup>20</sup> Following reunification in 1990, the Allied bombing war became part of the history of Germany as a whole.<sup>21</sup> Since the end of the twentieth century the air raids on German towns in the Second World War have been the subject of conflicting assessments as to their intention and their effects, and how they were perceived in German post-war society.<sup>22</sup> A host of accounts (often

<sup>14</sup> See for example Plato and Leh, *Ein unglaublicher Frühling*, 131–5; Naumann, *Der Krieg als Text*, 33–5, 58–61.

<sup>15</sup> On this expression see Dudek, 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'; Frei, *Adenauer's Germany*, pp. xi–xv.

<sup>16</sup> See Freemann, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 230. More than 10,000 members of the 8th USAAF's ground crew alone took part in these flights.

<sup>17</sup> For a picture of the early post-war years as they were experienced see Plato and Leh, *Ein unglaublicher Frühling*; Echternkamp, *Nach dem Krieg*.

<sup>18</sup> On wartime destruction and reconstruction see Diefendorf, *In the Wake of the War*; Beyme, *Wiederaufbau*; Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 313–460; Hohn, *Zerstörung*.

<sup>19</sup> A basic source on this is Durth and Gutschow, *Träume*.

<sup>20</sup> See Bergander, *Dresden*, 294–7, 307–8; Margalit, 'Der Luftangriff'; *Ein Volk von Opfern?*

<sup>21</sup> Naumann, *Der Krieg als Text*, 35, 58–63.

<sup>22</sup> Sebald, *Natural History of Destruction*; Friedrich, *Der Brand*; id., *Brandstätten*; Kucklick, *Feuerturm*. On the debate about the bomber war see *Ein Volk von Opfern?*; *Als Feuer vom Himmel fiel*; Braese, 'Bombenkrieg'; Naumann, 'Bombenkrieg'.

accompanied by legends) of life under the bombing have been part of family tradition handed down through the generations; since the 1980s these have become accessible as oral history.<sup>23</sup> As soon as the war ended, writers were dealing, in biographies, historical accounts, and novels, with the effects of the bombing and how people had coped with it mentally;<sup>24</sup> and public archives and museums collect and preserve the writings, photographic records, and specialist testimony from the home front in the Second World War. Since the 1970s, or rather more the 1980s, historical research has looked at the Allied air war most of all through the lens of regional studies.<sup>25</sup> These investigations have been supplemented by a great many local historians' overall treatments.<sup>26</sup> The use made of Luftwaffe auxiliaries and the children's evacuation scheme are two areas of wartime experience on the home front that have since the 1970s found a readership of their own, especially among those who had once been personally involved. Looking at the story of the bomber war from the viewpoint of how it has been transmitted, one sees an extensive range of sources of widely varying provenance, and an early and keen audience.<sup>27</sup> The documentary sources and the many and diverse personal testimonies make it possible to draw conclusions about what everyday wartime life was like, and about how people were living and what they were thinking, on the home front between 1939 and 1945.

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Schilde, *'Zum Weinen war keine Zeit'*; *Heimatfront Wesel*; *Gestohlene Jugend*. Publications on the air war from the 1950s and 1960s also included recollections by contemporaries, such as Rumpf, *The Bombing of Germany*; *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, suppl. 1. Personal memories of the home front have also come from countries not directly affected by the fighting, such as *Americans Remember the Home Front*.

<sup>24</sup> Prime sources are Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung*; Vees-Gulani, *Trauma*.

<sup>25</sup> See Golücke, *Schweinfurt*; Steinert, *Hitler's War*; Beck, *Under the Bombs*; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II (Müller), vi and vii (Boog); Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*; Bergander, *Dresden*; Beer, *Kriegsalltag*; Ueberschär, *Freiburg*; *Dortmund: Bombenkrieg*; Rütther, *Köln*; Schnatz, *Tiefflieger*.

<sup>26</sup> The local history treatment of the war from the air started quite soon after the war, as with Holz, *Ein Jahrtausend Raum Hagen*; Bieker, *Die brennende Stadt*; Baeumer, *Nordpol-Richard 4*; Huyskens, *Der Kreis Meschede*.

<sup>27</sup> Schätz, *Schüler-Soldaten*; Schörken, *Luftwaffenhelfer*; Nicolaisen, *Der Einsatz*; Schörken, 'Sozialisation'; Dabel, *KLIV*; Kock, *Der Führer*.

## II. The War, as Seen on the Home Front

### I. BUILD-UP OF THE STRATEGIC AIR WAR

THE history behind the strategic bombing war against Germany stretches back to the First World War,<sup>1</sup> and is a consequence of technological progress made, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the way war is fought. The arrival on the scene of greater numbers of aeroplanes and airships—the ‘Zeppelins’—went hand in hand with the forming of theories on how to use them as weapons of war.<sup>2</sup> In these, strategic considerations of a rapid overwhelming of the enemy played an important part.

In ‘modern’ wars, in the eyes of the military and politicians, separating ‘home’ and ‘front’ made and continues to make no sense given the extent to which the two are economically, socially, and politically entwined. The weapons produced well behind the front make fighting the war possible; the communications network ensures supplies to the front and the movement of goods between industrial areas; and the civilian population of the towns and cities provide the political and social backing for the system of government that is waging the war. From 1915 these thoughts increasingly led in Britain to a call for making strategic air attacks.<sup>3</sup> Up to 1918 French and British aircraft carried out regular raids on German cities, causing death and destruction. The Germans had to organize defences using anti-aircraft artillery (*Flak*) and fighter aircraft, and an air-raid warning system.<sup>4</sup>

There were plans for opening an air offensive with heavy bombers in the spring of 1919, targeting both south and south-west Germany and Berlin.<sup>5</sup> In this bombing plan, decided on in summer 1918, the ‘effect on morale’ the planned raids were hoped to have on the German civilian population played a large part. When after 1935 the British Bomber Command began to compile an index of potential targets, a number of industrial and transport installations that appeared on the lists had already been the focus of the strategic air war between 1915 and 1918.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary see Jones, *Origins of Strategy Bombing*; Kuropka, ‘Die britische Luftkriegskonzeption’.

<sup>2</sup> See Neitzel, ‘Zum strategischen Mißerfolg verdammt?’

<sup>3</sup> History of the evolution of the plan of bombardment by aeroplanes, 17 Nov. 1917, PRO, AIR 1/1976.

<sup>4</sup> Order by the deputy general command of VII Army Corps of 9 Sept. 1917 *re* blackouts; regulations for sounding warnings of air attack, issued by VII Army Corps [Autumn 1917], StadtA Mülheim/Ruhr, doc. 1200/1424.

<sup>5</sup> Review of air situation and strategy for the information of the Imperial War Cabinet by the Chief of the Air Staff, 27 June 1918, PRO, AIR 9/8.

By 1939 the 'Western Air Plans' set out certain targeting systems and attack plans, such the 'Ruhr plan'<sup>6</sup> for an air strike against electricity power stations and major coking plants in the west of Germany. When war began in September 1939 the British air war had at first to limit itself to leafletting raids and reconnaissance flights. This was for primarily political reasons; moreover, the reconnaissance missions and isolated bombing raids on military targets such as shipyards in north Germany, shipping convoys in the Channel, and airfields on the North Sea islands in the autumn of 1939 and winter of 1939/40 confirmed that the plans laid in pre-war years for an air war had been far too optimistic. In particular, the larger daylight raids like that on the German naval base at Wilhelmshaven on 18 December 1939 had cost the British dear. Raids at night, on the other hand, offered a certain amount of protection from the German fighters and flak, though the resultant blacking-out across the Reich did also present substantial navigational and target-identification problems. From April 1940, therefore, hydrogenation works producing synthetic fuel and railway marshalling yards in western Germany went to the top of the RAF's list of targets.<sup>7</sup> These raids, predominantly on marshalling yards in the Ruhr and the Rhineland, were however also designed—by causing constant air-raid warnings during the night hours—to lower the productivity and stamina of the industrial workforce and thus undermine 'fighting morale'. Armed with the bombing directive of 21 April 1940, Bomber Command launched the strategic air war against the Reich a month later, following the German attack on the west and the bombing of Rotterdam on 14 May.

## 2. THE FIRST AIR RAIDS, 1940 TO 1942

For the population in almost all parts of Germany night-time air-raid warnings and bombs became a feature of the air war from May 1940. Already on the 15th of that month the *Essener Generalanzeiger* was trying to play down the first of the raids, claiming that 'Despite the bombs that have fallen, the people of Ruhrgau Essen have been unwavering in their reaction. . . . They will always be so.'<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless the concern felt among the population was not lessened—if anything, it grew. Rumours about the effects the bombing was said to be having spread to all parts of Germany.<sup>9</sup>

After only a few weeks the constant incursions by British bombers into west and north-west German airspace were having their first effects, both physical

<sup>6</sup> Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, i. 97–8; Western Air Plan No. 4, PRO, AIR 14/775.

<sup>7</sup> The basis for this change in targets was a directive dated 21 Apr. 1940, declaring hydrogenation works and the German oil industry to be main targets for attack, PRO, AIR 14/776.

<sup>8</sup> *Kriegschronik der Stadt Oberhausen*, No. 131, 15 May 1940, StadtA Oberhausen.

<sup>9</sup> See *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, iv–vi.



and mental, on the civilian population, not least the workers among them. 'Dortmund reports a drop in output from the mines there, due to overtiredness and loss of vigour. Many members of the workforce, it is explained, have a long way to travel to get to the pithead, so that after the all-clear they have only a short time left in which to sleep.'<sup>10</sup> In the opinion of the Dortmund mining community, it was in part lack of sleep due to the air-raid warnings that led to the firedamp explosion at the 'Hansa' pit in Dortmund-Huckarde on the morning of 4 July 1940, in which fifty-one miners died.<sup>11</sup> In the Ruhr area, moreover, rumours of supposed enemy paratroops and impending gas attacks produced a mood of panic 'to a disturbing extent'. Summing the situation up two months after the British air raids began, the SS security service (the *Sicherheitsdienst*, SD) concluded that the general mood among the population (of western Germany) had 'at heart' not been affected by the raids. 'To an extent, these are taken with good spirit.'<sup>12</sup> On the other hand the British bombing in the summer of 1940 did also provide a field day for the morbidly curious. Already by 16 May it was being noted that 'there is no end to the people milling around. Thousands of Hagen inhabitants are out having a look at the damage—Holland has just capitulated.'<sup>13</sup>

The difference in the way the air war situation at that time was seen by those in charge is shown by two statements, from the viewpoint of the NSDAP and of the government ARP police. Still in September 1940 Martin Bormann had been telling the Gauleiters: 'The RAF is unable to carry out really effective bombing. It has neither enough aircraft, nor the bombs needed.'<sup>14</sup> The ARP police saw matters quite differently in January 1941. Speaking of a number of British raids on ports on the north German coast they commented that 'a concentrated, large-scale raid like that on the city of Bremen must now always be expected in the Ruhr area'.<sup>15</sup> Against this, the German air raids on London and other British cities that had begun in September 1940 and continued until May of the following year were by now already on a substantially more serious scale than the RAF's attacks on Germany at the time. The prime target for the Luftwaffe was arms production and the enemy's economic potential.<sup>16</sup> This heavy bombing was meant, as a looked-for side-effect, to weaken the 'will to fight' of those living in the British cities.

To judge from the SD's observations, the German population derived great satisfaction from the German air raids depicted in the press and the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., v. 1431 (No. 110, 29 July 1940).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 1365 (No. 104, 11 July 1940)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 1335 (No. 102, 4 July 1940).

<sup>13</sup> Diary of Wilhelmine von H. (16 May 1940), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>14</sup> Attachment to Bormann's circular to the Gauleiters of 30 Sept. 1940 *re* air-raid protection, StA Münster, OP 5197.

<sup>15</sup> ARP planning meeting at Recklinghausen, 9 Jan. 1941, StA Münster, OP 5197.

<sup>16</sup> See on this *Germany and the Second World War*, ii. 386–402 and vii. 362–9; Neitzel, 'Zum strategischen Mißerfolg verdammt?', 179; Balke, *Luftkrieg in Europa*, pt. 1, 167–72, 420–6; Boog, 'Luftwaffe und unterschiedsloser Bombenkrieg', 450–8.

weekly newsreels; the wish was indeed expressed for the Luftwaffe 'to move on to "erasing cities" in England'.<sup>17</sup> By June 1941, the Luftwaffe had claimed more than 42,000 lives in British towns and cities;<sup>18</sup> extensive damage was caused in the capital and most of the country's major cities. Nazi propaganda strove, by giving an exaggerated picture of the loss of life and damage that had resulted from British bombs dropped on German residential districts in many places in 1940/1, to present German attacks on British cities to those abroad and its own population as 'retaliation'. In the autumn of 1940 the Reich propaganda ministry organized tours of bombed German cities for journalists from neutral and 'friendly' countries, so as to use the destruction caused there as evidence of an RAF air war it claimed to be directed solely at the civilian population.<sup>19</sup>

The death of twelve handicapped children, who on 18/19 September 1940 were victim to a British bomb that fell certainly by chance on the children's hospital in Bethel near Bielefeld, was on the orders of Joseph Goebbels denounced at home and abroad as a particularly gruesome act of terror by the 'murderous British fire-raisers'.<sup>20</sup> And this at a time when in the Reich the undertaking code-named T-4, involving the mass murder of tens of thousands of the mentally ill and physically handicapped—ordered by Hitler and disguised as 'euthanasia'—had long been going on apace in hospitals just like the one at Bethel. When anyone handicapped fell victim to a British bomb this provided the Nazi propaganda machine with a welcome means of branding the air raids as acts of terror committed against the defenceless, the old, and the sick, and against children, and of achieving the appropriate political effect. A further example was the propaganda lie of the 'murder of the Freiburg children': on 10 May 1940, three of the Luftwaffe's own Heinkel bombers accidentally dropped bombs on the town, killing fifty-seven persons including twenty-two children.<sup>21</sup> Goebbels blamed British and French pilots for having deliberately carried out the raid, and spread the false story of the 'murder of the Freiburg children' throughout Europe so as to set opinion in the neutral countries against those in charge of the British air war.

With the intensification of the bombing war in the spring of 1942 the recognition grew in many quarters 'that the enemy will now undertake terror

<sup>17</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, v. 1788 (No. 143, 21 Nov. 1940). 'Erasing' was clearly borrowed directly from Hitler's speech in the Berlin Sportpalast on 4 Sept. 1940, Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2086.

<sup>18</sup> Monthly statistics on civilians killed in air raids on Britain are in *Chronology and Index of the Second World War*, 33–60.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, a tour for foreign journalists through the Rhineland and Ruhr in November 1940, 'Rote Erde', reported in the *Westfälische Landeszeitung* of 29 Nov. 1940, StadtA Hagen.

<sup>20</sup> *Die Wehrmachtberichte*, i. 307 (19 Sept. 1940); *Die geheimen Tagesberichte*, ii. 212. The Luftwaffe command daily reports following the raid recorded seven dead and thirteen wounded. The bomb on Bethel was still in 1941 serving as alleged evidence of 'murder' as the British way of waging war, Reipert, *Kriegsmethoden*, 169.

<sup>21</sup> On this and what follows see Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 88–91.

attacks on a grand scale'.<sup>22</sup> The SD reported in June 'that the continuing British terror raids on German cities are being watched with growing concern, and causing considerable worry'.<sup>23</sup> A month later, after a series of four heavy attacks on Duisburg, the SD noted that fear of an increase in the bombing raids was felt 'in a large part of the population'.<sup>24</sup> It was widely supposed that the intensified air attacks would be the build-up to the opening of a 'second front' by the western Allies.<sup>25</sup> Goebbels's impression of the mood situation in the western German cities mainly affected by the air war in the summer of 1942 was rather more positive than that of the SD. Concerned for the 'fighting spirit' and 'attitude' of the German population, the propaganda minister undertook on 7 August a tour of the Rhineland, which had been suffering constant bombing. In Cologne and Düsseldorf he organized massive rallies, and inspected the damage the raids had caused thus far. After this tour he noted: 'If Churchill believes he is going to be able, with his mass air raids, to break the morale of the people of the Rhineland, especially the Catholics among them, he is making a fatal mistake.'<sup>26</sup> Among the German population, on the other hand, the desire for revenge for the British bombing was becoming ever more loudly expressed. After the raids on Lübeck and Rostock in April 1942 the Luftwaffe had been ordered by Hitler and Hermann Göring to carry out retaliatory attacks on English cities. London was however not to be made a main target for the time being, in order not to provoke any massive British counter-attack on the Reich capital.<sup>27</sup> In Britain, the choice of small and medium-sized cities of cultural and art-historical importance earned this series of raids by the Luftwaffe between the spring and autumn of 1942 the sarcastic sobriquet of 'Baedeker raids'.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. THE BOMBING WAR INTENSIFIES FROM 1943

By the spring of 1943, RAF Bomber Command was equipped for carrying out a comprehensive air offensive. It now had a powerful bomber fleet, as well as electronic systems that made accurate navigation and target-finding possible.<sup>29</sup> At the Casablanca Conference in the January of that year Britain and the United States of America decided on a combined offensive by their air forces against both Germany and its satellite states.<sup>30</sup> This was directed first

<sup>22</sup> Order from RVK for defence district VI, Dienststelle Oberpräsidium der Rheinprovinz in Essen, Akz. RVK/Allg. No. 229 of 9 June 1942 to all mayors, rural district councillors, and heads of administrative divisions in its area of responsibility, StadtA Herne, Best. Wanne-Eickel, Akte Verfügungen und Erlasse 1939-43.

<sup>23</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, x. 3882 (No. 295, 29 June 1942).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 3918 (No. 297, 8 July 1942).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 3882 (No. 295, 29 June 1942).

<sup>26</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, v. 275 (8 Aug. 1942).

<sup>27</sup> On the German retaliation raids see Balke, *Luftkrieg in Europa*, pt. 2, 102-4; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 367-8.

<sup>28</sup> See also Rothnie, *The Baedeker Blitz*.

<sup>29</sup> See the comprehensive account by Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vii.

<sup>30</sup> Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, iv. 273-83.

against the industrial area of the Rhineland and Westphalia, which with more than 5 million inhabitants was among the country's most densely populated regions. As the 'Vulcan's forge' of the Reich the industry of western Germany took top place for the building of tanks, artillery, and U-boats, as well as air armaments.<sup>31</sup> But besides this, coal-mining and, especially, the steel industry were highly important production sectors that ensured the trouble-free running of the whole German war economy. Bomber Command had been trying since May 1940 to strike hard at the industry and population of the Rhineland and Ruhr with its air raids; although these involved thousands of aircraft they often, until early 1943, failed because of the inadequate technology for navigating and target-finding, and because of the industrial smog that blanketed the area.

An attack on Essen on the night of 5/6 March 1943 opened the Bomber Command offensive known as the 'battle of the Ruhr'.<sup>32</sup> 'There was a drumming noise as if Hell was breaking loose', said an Essen woman of her impressions on night of the raid. 'We came up once [from the cellar shelter] to look at the incendiary bombs, but had only got as far as the courtyard when there was already this hissing noise, and just as we were back down—whump! The sky was already as light as day. We'd hardly started to go up again when another mine came whistling down, clouds of mortar came in through the little ventilation grilles so that we were swallowing brick dust . . . All day long there were still occasional bangs from somewhere or other—there were still unexploded bombs all over the place . . . it's really marvellous, the heroic stamina people showed here putting up with it all, without grumbling.'<sup>33</sup> Already a day before the start of the battle of the Ruhr a small formation of 16 B-17 'Flying Fortresses' of the 8th USAAF had for the first time bombed a target deep inside Germany (the marshalling yards at Hamm).<sup>34</sup> The daylight raid, in which 150 were killed in Hamm, came as a shock to the inhabitants as the generally held view, peddled by Nazi propaganda, was that the American bombers would be unable to attack deep into Germany without suffering high losses. The SD reported that after the raid on Hamm 'the public's confidence in the defences had been badly shaken' by the aircraft flying over the town 'in formation'.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> There are excellent surveys of arms production and its importance for the war effort in the war diaries of armaments inspectorate VI (Münster) and the armaments commands in Dortmund and Essen for the period from 1939 to May 1944, BA-MA RW 20 and 21.

<sup>32</sup> On the battle of the Ruhr see Boog in (*Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 22–9); Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 363–5; Richards, *The Hardest Victory*, 163–7; Levine, *Strategic Bombing*, 50–3; Phillips, *The Valley*; Cooper, *Air Battle of the Ruhr*. For the attacks on Essen see *Essen unter Bomben*; Krüger, 'Luftangriffe auf Essen'.

<sup>33</sup> Letter by Carola Reissner on 11 Mar. 1943, quoted from *Essen im Luftkrieg*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> 8th USAAF Mission No. 39: Hamm marshalling yards, 4 Mar. 1943, PRO AIR 40/388; *Die geheimen Tagesberichte*, vi. 199; Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 43; *Der Luftkrieg und die Stadt Hamm*, 26–7 (4 Mar. 1943). This attack had been preceded by two missions on 4 and 14 February that were aborted during the approach over the North Sea.

<sup>35</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 4923 (No. 366, 11 Mar. 1943).

The battle of the Ruhr offensive was run by RAF Bomber Command, which between March and July 1943 subjected almost all the major cities in western Germany to heavy bombing, without the ubiquitous flak or the Luftwaffe's night fighters being able to put up any effective defence.<sup>36</sup> More than 15,000 died on the ground, including many foreign workers and prisoners of war, and over 3,000 Bomber Command aircrew also lost their lives.

A special operation against dams on 16 and 17 August 1943 destroyed not only the Eder dam in Hesse, but also the Möhne dam in the Sauerland.<sup>37</sup> For the population in the Möhne and Ruhr valleys the attack on the dams was catastrophic. Two days afterwards the chief minister of the province of Westphalia, Karl Friedrich Kolbow, summed up what had happened: 'The destruction of the Möhne dam goes beyond all imagining. In the lower Möhne valley and Ruhr valley between Neheim and Hengsteysee there is total devastation. How often mankind has had to suffer such frightful setbacks through his technical activities! No one would have believed back in 1911, when the Möhne dam was built, that for their homeland it would prove more of a curse than a blessing.'<sup>38</sup> Rumours went the rounds throughout Germany about the effects of the 'Möhne disaster'. Among large sections of the German population the death toll was reputed to be up to 30,000.<sup>39</sup> To put an end to the rumours the authorities in June 1943 published a 'final tally' for the casualties of 1,579 dead, of whom no fewer than 1,026 were foreign workers.<sup>40</sup>

On the night of 23/4 May 1943 the heaviest raid on a German city thus far was launched against Dortmund. More than 800 mostly four-engined long-range bombers dropped over 2,500 tonnes of high-explosive and incendiaries, almost twice the tonnage that had fallen on Cologne in May of the previous year during the '1,000-bomber' raid. There were more than 650 deaths.<sup>41</sup> Because of a shortage of water, the result of the inundation of waterworks on the Ruhr after the attack on the dams, the many large fires that broke out could not be fought adequately, and this led to extensive area fires. 'The heaviest blow for us in Dortmund is probably the destruction of the Alter Rathaus with its famous banqueting hall dating back to 1232. The museum of the plastic arts, too, has been totally destroyed. The Dortmund Stadt- und

<sup>36</sup> On the flak and night-fighter defences see *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 183–211, 216–35; on the situation in the Ruhr as a whole see Tewes, *Jugend im Krieg*, 51–81.

<sup>37</sup> A report on consequences in the valley of the Edertal is summarized in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, i/I. 147–51.

<sup>38</sup> Kolbow to Dr Runte, 19 May 1943, Westfälisches Archivamt, Kolbow collection.

<sup>39</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, 5277 (No. 385, 23 May 1943).

<sup>40</sup> 'Die endgültigen Zahlen der Opfer des Luftangriffes auf die Möhne-Talsperre', *Hagener Zeitung*, 1 June 1943, StadtA Hagen. At that date there were still fifty-six *Volksgenossen* posted as missing. On the other hand Euler, *Als Deutschlands Dämme brachen*, 218, mentions—without giving sources—1,069 dead and 225 missing. Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 104, gives a total figure of '1,300 civilians', again with no source.

<sup>41</sup> Blank, 'Die Stadt Dortmund', 30–1.

Landesbibliothek, one of the most important libraries in the west of Germany, has gone, and more than 200,000 volumes and one of the leading newspaper institutes in the Reich have fallen victim to the terror bombers,' was how, two weeks later, the Dortmund city councillor described the incalculable cultural losses suffered through the raid.<sup>42</sup>

Everywhere in the major cities of western Germany the destruction and number of deaths grew in the spring and summer of 1943. During area bombing on Wuppertal on 29/30 May, the town's Barmen district experienced the first occurrence of the phenomenon of the 'firestorm'. Within a few hours at least 3,500 people had died in the town, which up to then had been scarcely touched by the air war.<sup>43</sup> In Cologne more than 4,370 were killed on the night of 28/9 June, at that time the highest number of fatalities in a single air raid anywhere in the Reich.<sup>44</sup> 'Now and then people appear out of the clouds of smoke—emergency-squad soldiers with swollen eyes, refugees with a bundle of salvaged belongings over their shoulder, gasping for breath. A dead horse, bloated out of shape, lies in the street, and then—a hideous sight—bodies, shrivelled, scarcely clothed,' a journalist confided to his diary. 'What was 31 May last year, compared to this spawning of total war! I shall never forget this horror.'<sup>45</sup>

Goebbels, who had visited Düsseldorf, Wuppertal, and Dortmund on 18 June, and at a mass gathering in the Westfalenhalle had preached the creed of 'defeating terror with counter-terror',<sup>46</sup> used the attack on Cologne for a fresh propaganda offensive against the British air war, condemning the damage done to the world-famous Cologne cathedral as a cultural atrocity.<sup>47</sup> The value of this propaganda at home was however doubtful, as the SD quickly found. 'Better Cologne Cathedral smashed than a hundred people killed', was the view expressed by one armaments worker in Suhl, in Thuringia. And a woman worker in Halle ventured to comment: 'But the poor people who lost their lives on that occasion are not mentioned. That matter is silently ignored. The individual apparently has no more value in present-day Germany!'<sup>48</sup> Other sections of the public nursed thoughts of revenge: 'Our Führer ought now to give the order to destroy the big cities in England too.'<sup>49</sup> Already by March 1943 the SD were noting fears among the population of western Germany 'that the British and Americans had decided to wipe out one town here after the other'.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Kriegschronik der Stadt Dortmund*, report by Dr Klein on 10 June 1943, StadtA Dortmund, coll. 424–36.

<sup>43</sup> On the raids on Wuppertal see *Vor fünfzig Jahren*.

<sup>44</sup> Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 403–4.

<sup>45</sup> Pettenberg, *Starke Verbände*, 162–5 (29 June 1943).

<sup>46</sup> Blank, 'Die Stadt Dortmund', 34–5.

<sup>47</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 564–5 (30 June 1943). See also the reaction in the neutral press, in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, suppl. 2, 219–23.

<sup>48</sup> Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 206.

<sup>49</sup> *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges* (1983), 122 (letter from Mühlheim, 14 June 1943).

<sup>50</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 4923 (No. 366, 11 Mar. 1943).



Stories of the effects of the air raids on centres in the west of Germany were soon reaching the furthest corners of the Reich. 'Information' circulated among the public, to the effect that 15,000 had been killed by the British bombers in Dortmund, 17,000 in Düsseldorf, and 27,000 in Wuppertal.<sup>51</sup> Essen was said to have been totally destroyed with the ruins under 'state of emergency' rule, according to an SD report from southern Germany.<sup>52</sup> In fact the heavy raid on Essen in the evening of 5 March 1943 proved an alarm signal for Goebbels in particular; two days afterwards he wrote in his diary: 'If the British carry on their air war in the same way, it is going to give us enormous problems. From the purely psychological viewpoint, the most dangerous thing about it is that the population can find no way of doing anything against it.'<sup>53</sup> On 17 March, a few days after a renewed attack on the city, he was forced to note: 'In home affairs the air war continues to be of crucial importance . . . In Essen especially the devastation is very bad. The evacuation problem there, too, has become urgent and pressing. There is no more accommodation available . . . I've been told, for instance, that in Duisburg there are families bombed out in the middle of December last year who are still having to sleep on straw . . . Göring can't understand why the British don't attack the Ruhr continually, without a break, because there we are in some places having to deal with production bottlenecks that present enormous dangers.'<sup>54</sup>

After the raid on Dortmund in May 1943 Goebbels recorded: 'About the air war there is only one thing to be said, over and over: we are hopelessly inferior in the air, and have to grit our teeth in fury and take the British and American blows.'<sup>55</sup> He went about organizing a kind of 'counter-propaganda', to combat effectively the psychological dangers for the public's 'mood' and 'attitude' that he felt were bound to result from the bombing. The population in the cities hit by the air raids were henceforth, at Gau and Kreis level, to receive greater 'mood-boosting' attention from Party members and the staff of the propaganda offices. At the same time 'word-of-mouth' propaganda was to be stepped up at the central points distributing aid and information. The breakdown in fighting morale that the British had hoped to achieve in the bombed cities did not however happen; instead, sarcastically intended poems went the rounds, like one echoing Goebbels's 'total war' speech in the Berlin Sportpalast on 18 February that year: *Lieber Tommy fliege weiter, / wir sind alle Ruhrarbeiter, / Fliege weiter nach Berlin, / die haben alle 'ja' geschrieen*, [Fly on, Tommy, we're all Ruhr workers here; carry on to Berlin — they all shouted 'yes!' and cheered].<sup>56</sup>

As a result of the heavy damage done during the battle of the Ruhr, the German war economy was for the first time facing a serious threat that had

<sup>51</sup> Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 59.

<sup>52</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 4983 (No. 369, 22 Mar. 1943).

<sup>53</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vii. 491 (7 Mar. 1943).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 570 (17 Mar. 1943), 578 (18 Mar. 1943).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 358 (25 May 1943).

<sup>56</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 5217 (No. 381, 6 May 1943).



to be countered with measures planned on a long-term basis. To cope with the widespread destruction done by the raids, extra supplies of raw materials and (mostly foreign) labour were made available. The German Labour Front (DAF) set up its own 'Ruhr taskforce' in July 1943, devoted right through to the end of the war mainly to caring for the workforce and local population.<sup>57</sup> In the Gau authority for southern Westphalia, as a reaction to the aftermath of the raids, a 'Gau emergency team' was set up in the summer of 1943 (in addition to the Gau action staff already created early in the year); this was to coordinate the immediate deployment of the Party's 'self-protection' and aid personnel.<sup>58</sup> The NSV in particular, together with other divisions of the Party, poured staff and material resources into its efforts for the towns and cities of western Germany. The SA formed rescue squads and emergency teams from among its own ranks. The Organisation Todt (OT), which came under the ministry for armaments and munitions and since June 1943 had been in charge of rebuilding the Möhne dam, was with a large 'Ruhr action staff' (*OT-Einsatzstab Ruhr*), later called the 'OT Ruhr action group' (*OT-Einsatzgruppe Ruhrgebiet*), permanently involved in dealing with damaged buildings and in measures for providing air-raid protection.<sup>59</sup> Albert Speer had visited the Ruhr area at once after the bombing of the Möhne dam, and took personal charge of the first measures for coping with the destruction that in his judgement could put the whole economic structure in jeopardy. August 1943 saw the creation of the 'Ruhr Staff', headquartered in Essen-Kettwig;<sup>60</sup> answering directly to Speer, it was made up of industrial, power supply, and transport experts together with administrators from western Germany and the armaments ministry.<sup>61</sup> Its task, through to the end of war, was the central control and coordination of measures for overcoming the bomb damage done to industrial and food supply concerns and to the transport network. The effect of the measures introduced by the Ruhr Staff was as a rule apparent immediately after a heavy bombing raid.<sup>62</sup> The experience built up in a variety of sectors in the industrial area of Rhineland-Westphalia in the summer of 1943 showed the way for dealing with the results of air raids in the rest of Germany. The lack of further wide-scale bombing gave arms production in the west of Germany valuable time to put right the severe damage and losses, and to form itself afresh by the time 1944 began.

<sup>57</sup> Work directives for the DAF 'Rhein und Ruhr' taskforce, 7 July 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, Akte Tiefbauamt/47.

<sup>58</sup> Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar', 193–6.

<sup>59</sup> OT-Einsatzstab Ruhr to the Oberpräsidenten of Westphalia and the Rhine province, 10 June 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, Akte Tiefbauamt/47. This was the first large-scale involvement within the Reich of the OT, which was normally employed in the occupied territories.

<sup>60</sup> On the 'Speer Ruhr Staff' see Janssen, *Ministerium Speer*, 147–8, 376; Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*, ii. 143–4. See also the situation report by armaments inspectorate VI (Münster) for 1 July–30 Sept. 1943, BA-MA RW 20–6/10.

<sup>61</sup> To manage the 'Ruhr Staff' Speer appointed the chairman of Vereinigte Stahlwerke, Walter Rohland ('Panzer Rohland'); see his biography in *Findbuch zum Nachlaß Walter Rohland*.

<sup>62</sup> *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 238–40.

## 4. HAMBURG AND BERLIN: THE TURNING POINT IN THE AIR WAR

Between 25 July and 3 August 1943, RAF Bomber Command with support from the 8th USAAF carried out a series of attacks on Hamburg—Operation GOMORRAH.<sup>63</sup> The heavy raids on Hamburg produced the most complete devastation of a major city there had ever been up to that time; more than 41,000 lost their lives, over 18,000 of them during the ‘night of the firestorm’ on 27/8 July and some 10,000 on that of the 29/30th.<sup>64</sup> More than 900,000 were bombed out, well over 35,000 buildings were totally destroyed, and 43 per cent or more of Hamburg’s dwellings were rendered uninhabitable.<sup>65</sup> ‘We have here the destruction of a town of more than a million inhabitants, without parallel in history,’ wrote Goebbels on 29 July,<sup>66</sup> to continue two days later with: ‘I have been dealing with the air war all day long. It is the problem of all problems, one might say the Reich’s bleeding wound. During the night there was another heavy raid on Remscheid. Every one of these raids destroys the heart of a city. How strong the enemy air force must be to be able to carry on such a massive offensive with hardly a break. The number we manage to shoot down cannot in any way be called enough. This has, of course, the worst possible effect on the public mood here.’<sup>67</sup>

Just as with the air raids on western German towns, news of the destruction of Hamburg spread rapidly throughout the Reich. In August 1943 the SD recorded that:

The expansion and intensification of the air war is . . . currently one of the strongest causes of stress. The heavy raids on Hamburg, Hanover, Remscheid, Kassel, Heligoland, etc. have in places caused shock and great consternation . . . In the areas concerned one can talk in terms of a real ‘air-raid terror psychosis’, expressing itself in sharply critical comments on what the Luftwaffe leadership is doing. The anxiety felt among the population in areas that have so far not been affected that their towns, too, could soon be the victim of enemy attack is growing more and more. One has to wonder how this will develop further if German retaliation does not soon begin.<sup>68</sup>

The series of raids on Hamburg, with its disastrous effects, brought home to the German population and the Nazi leadership what a strong striking force RAF Bomber Command now possessed. As the support and supplies from the local and government authorities in Hamburg had almost completely broken down after the raids, the NSDAP stepped in with a massive effort.<sup>69</sup> The NSV made sure the people of Hamburg were looked after: those who had

<sup>63</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 43–51; Hanke, Paschen and Jungwirth, *Hamburg im Bombenkrieg*; Büttner, ‘Gomorra’; Middlebrook, *Hamburg*; Brunswig, *Feuersturm*. There is a collection of eyewitness reports in *Hamburg 1943*. For accounts by emergency services and eyewitnesses see also *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, suppl. 1, 51–99.

<sup>64</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 47.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 200 (1 Aug. 1943).

<sup>68</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 5575 (SD report on home affairs, 4 Aug. 1943).

<sup>69</sup> See the report on NSV involvement in the Hamburg disaster days, BA NS 26/260.

<sup>66</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 190 (29 July 1943).

been bombed out were cared for by the Party, and evacuated from the city, while rescue squads drawn from the personnel of the Party divisions dug buried survivors from the ruins. During Operation GOMORRAH there was seen for the first time the disintegration of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the emergence of a 'bomb site society', in which for a time the routine of daily life collapsed.<sup>70</sup> The almost total destruction within just a few days of a city inhabited by a million or more was traumatic far beyond Hamburg itself, and added fuel to fears among politicians and people even in regions that had so far been spared any heavy raids. Yet there were other factors besides the air attacks acting on the public's war morale: in the summer of 1943 there were the capitulation by Italy, up to then Germany's most important ally, and the defeat in North Africa. The loss of the tank battle in the Kursk salient (Operation ZITADELLE) in July that year gave a portent of the collapse on the eastern front. And even the U-boat war against Allied shipping, waged vigorously ever since 1940 and still in May 1943 yielding reports of successes to serve the propaganda effort, had only a month later to be almost entirely abandoned because of heavy German losses and the extensive Allied countermeasures.<sup>71</sup>

In massive leafletting raids over German towns the Allies gave details of defeats suffered by the Wehrmacht in various theatres of war, and—pointing to the bombed cities of western Germany and to shattered Hamburg—presaged a further stepping-up of the bombing war.<sup>72</sup> For Göring in particular, the drastically worsening situation on the home front meant a great loss of prestige both in Party circles and among the general public.<sup>73</sup> As commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe the Reich marshal was, especially after the severe outcome of the attacks on Hamburg, held responsible for the deficiencies in the air defences, for the lack of retaliation (something that had repeatedly been promised, mainly by Hitler, Goebbels, and other top Nazi officials), and for the inadequate means of protection available to the civilian population. Faced with the innumerable stories and jokes that were circulating about Göring alone, even the courts and police had to concede defeat; mocking of the boast Göring was said to have made that if even a single bomb fell on the Ruhr his name was Meier was the most widespread and at the same time the most harmless example of the insubordination being shown.<sup>74</sup> In the late summer of 1943, for example, a 'bedtime prayer' was going the rounds in western Germany, Berlin, and elsewhere that in rhyming verses poked fun at Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, and Robert Ley. On Göring it ran: '*Hilf dem Meier, lieber Gott, / jetzt in seiner*

<sup>70</sup> On this see Bajohr, *Hamburg*, 318–36. According to Werner, *Bleib übrig*, 263, Hamburg saw for a couple of weeks the formation of a 'classless society' in which 'everything was shared in a brotherly way, without regard to anyone's rank or status'.

<sup>71</sup> On the U-boat war see Rahn in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi, 342–405, on Kursk see Karl-Heinz Frieser in vol. viii (still to be published).

<sup>72</sup> See the edition in *Flugblattpropaganda*, v–vi.

<sup>73</sup> Steinert, *Hitlers War*, 228; also Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vii, 172–5, 260–7.

<sup>74</sup> Niermann, *Die Durchsetzung politischer und politisierter Straffjustiz*, 321.

*großen Not, / gib ihm einen richtigen Geist, / damit er wieder Göring heißt* [To Meier, dear God, please give heed, / Help him in his greatest need, / Set him with his spirit soaring, / So he's back to being Göring].<sup>75</sup> Göring, his reputation crumbling, had to be satisfied with making changes to the terms the administration used when dealing with bomb damage—in effect, a way of dodging the facts. In December 1943 the interministerial committee on air-raid damage (*Interministerielle Luftkriegsschäden-Ausschuß*, ILA) transmitted to the Gauleiters and government offices an order from Göring erasing the word ‘disaster’ from the official vocabulary.<sup>76</sup> In future, instead of talk of the work of disaster teams, only the positive-sounding expression ‘immediate aid’ was to be used for all measures undertaken by the Party agencies, authorities, and Wehrmacht in connection with bombing raids.

After the bombing of Hamburg, the inhabitants of the Reich’s capital were in almost daily fear of a heavy RAF attack on Berlin that might have effects at least comparable to those in Hamburg. When Goebbels, as Reich defence commissioner (*Reichsverteidigungskommissar*, RVK), in early August organized the evacuation of women and schoolchildren from the city, there was according to SD monitoring reports a mood akin to panic. Rumours went round that a big raid was imminent, and even that lime pits had already been dug for the bomb victims’ corpses.<sup>77</sup> On 6 November 1943 Goebbels visited the Gau capitals at Kassel and Hanover, which had been bombed in October. His impression of Kassel was ‘shattering’; a ‘catastrophic blaze of the vastest extent’ was how he described what resembled a field of rubble more than a Hesse metropolis looking like a city. On the way to Hanover, Goebbels noted with some relief that the province as a whole had still suffered no damage: ‘It is still by and large only individual towns that are falling victim to the British and American terror from the air.’<sup>78</sup> Referring to an edifying report from Robert Ley, who had toured the towns of western Germany a few days earlier, he felt able to say: ‘The British are definitely going to have another think coming if they believe they can break German fighting morale with their air war or a propaganda campaign. There is no question of that. With the attitude of the German people in the homeland it’s impossible for the war to be lost.’<sup>79</sup>

The night of 22/3 November 1943 saw the first really damaging raid on the German capital. More than 700 four-engined aircraft used radar to bomb the centre of the city through almost total cloud cover. ‘One gets the impression that the whole of the government quarter is on fire. The Wilhelmplatz is lit up

<sup>75</sup> ‘Nachtgebet’ (typescript, dated by postmark as late summer 1943), StadtA Hagen. This poem is also documented for Berlin, Studnitz, *Als Berlin brannte*, 151. The original authors of these and similar satirical verses and flysheets are unknown. Also known, and documented for many towns, is an ‘Invitation to the cellar party’, with a ‘programme’ featuring German flak and British bombers, see *Hagen: Kriegsjahre und Nachkriegszeit*, 88 (fig. 29).

<sup>76</sup> Circular No. 70 from the ILA, 18 Dec. 1943, re Reich marshal’s wish to eliminate the word ‘disaster’, StadtA Bochum, coll. Bo-71/3.

<sup>77</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 5570 (SD report on home affairs, 5 Aug. 1943).

<sup>78</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 238–9 (6 Nov. 1943).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 318 (19 Nov. 1943).

almost as bright as day. Around the Brandenburger Tor the French embassy building is burning down, and so is the British. This modern war is one big horror,' was the personal impression Goebbels recorded as he sheltered in his command post during the raid.<sup>80</sup> The RAF's area bombing raids on Berlin in November 1943 did a great deal of damage, permanently altering the appearance of the country's capital, as one Berlin woman wrote in a letter:

You can't imagine what a heap of ruins Berlin is! Between Zoo, Wittenbergplatz, Lützowufer, and Einemstraße there's hardly a habitable house standing. The embassy quarter is burnt out, the Hansa district and Moabit lie in ruins, at the Alexanderplatz, from the Oranienburger Tor past the Stettin station to Reinickendorf it must be the same. All the main railway stations have been badly hit, Leipzigerstraße, Potsdamerstraße, Zeughaus, Singakademie are no different. Kurfürstendamm and Charlottenburg are burning—this sample will surely be enough! Last night Spandau must have been especially badly devastated. All over the place it's still burning, and the ruins are collapsing all the time.<sup>81</sup>

As in other cities, Berlin lost 'overnight', one could say in a couple of hours, much of what for generations had given the population its identity—and much of which only today, after the reunification of the two German states, is gradually rising anew or, in part, has already reappeared.<sup>82</sup> Seen in this light, the bombing raids struck not only at the people's 'fighting morale' but also at their cultural and regional identity that even National Socialism had been unable to extinguish. Bomber Command showed in 1943/4, with a number of area bombing raids, that the intensified air war was not limited just to western and northern Germany and Berlin, but now extended over the whole of the Reich. The attack on Leipzig on the night of 3/4 December 1943 alone killed more than 1,500, and for the first time caused severe damage there. 'Hundreds and thousands of people died. In every street one stumbled over bodies. All day long trucks filled with corpses still threaded their way along streets through the rubble of a city filled with the smell of fires and decomposing bodies.'<sup>83</sup> The SD noted that the raid on Leipzig had caused great consternation and fear among the population of central Germany.<sup>84</sup> Up to the autumn of 1943 the whole of Saxony—like Bavaria and Franconia—had because of the relatively infrequent air raids been seen as a sort of 'air-raid shelter' for the Reich. The people of Saxony now looked on the attack on Leipzig as the start of constant bombing in their region as well.

<sup>80</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 340 (23 Nov. 1943).

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Barbara Wenzel to her brother Henning, 24 Nov. 1943, in *LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online* (last accessed by the author on 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives\\_gedaechtnis/053/index.html](http://www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives_gedaechtnis/053/index.html).

<sup>82</sup> An example in another German city is the Frauenkirche in Dresden, which was destroyed in February 1945 and since 1990 has been rebuilt, partly from the salvaged ruins of the old. In Berlin there are plans to rebuild the Stadtschloß, which was badly damaged by the bombing and in 1950 was blown up on the orders of the SED (German Socialist Unity Party) regime.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted from Knopf and Titel, *Der Leipziger Gutenbergweg*, 124 (report by Gotthold Müller); on Leipzig see Horn, *Leipzig*.

<sup>84</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 6108 (report of 9 Dec. 1943).

In the winter of 1943/4 the German capital remained the main target; up to March 1944 Bomber Command carried out nineteen heavy area bombing raids on Berlin. By the time the battle of Berlin ended more than 812,000 of its inhabitants had been made homeless, and over 9,000 were dead or missing.<sup>85</sup> Yet Bomber Command, too, had paid a high price: 3,347 aircrew members had died, while 992 survived when their aircraft was shot down or crashed, and became prisoners of war.<sup>86</sup> In their objective of breaking the morale and will to resist of the people of Berlin the raids had failed, just as those on the Ruhr and Hamburg had earlier. 'Our walls may crack, but not our hearts!' and 'Life goes on!' were slogans used by Goebbels to shore up the population's 'mood' and 'attitude'.<sup>87</sup> In Berlin, as in other cities, the targeted propaganda and measures taken by the Party managed, right up to the autumn of 1944, to steer the effects on morale in the direction desired by the Nazi leadership.

On the night of 24/5 March 1944 Bomber Command's long-range four-engined bombers set off for Berlin for the last time. The job of flying heavy raids on the German capital had already, in the final phase of the battle of Berlin, been taken over by the 8th US Air Force;<sup>88</sup> on 4 March, for instance, a total of 504 B-17 Flying Fortress bombers escorted by 770 day fighters carried out a daylight raid that was followed by two more on the following day (though only that on 8 March succeeded in causing heavy damage to the Erkner ball-bearing factory that was then one of the 8th USAAF's main targets in and around Berlin).<sup>89</sup> The inhabitants of 'Big B', as the Allies called Berlin, experienced the disastrous consequences of the first of the American bombings on 29 April and 7 and 8 May 1944. On the 7th, for example, 550 aircraft dropped 1,400 tonnes of HE and incendiaries on the Berlin area. 'The attack is aimed at the whole city,' Goebbels commented when the raid was over. 'In the main it is the electricity supply and transport that have been affected; industry is by and large unscathed.'<sup>90</sup> Yet already by the next day he had to acknowledge widespread damage, a lengthy disruption to rail traffic, and the fact that 'the heavy American bombing in these daylight raids is claiming ever more lives'.<sup>91</sup> After the first daylight raids on Berlin the SD reported, of the fears felt among the population, that 'In the Reich capital there is every expectation of even more intense attacks. Some women are as afraid now as they were during the heavy raids in November. Many people were wary of venturing far from their homes, for fear of being caught out in an air raid. Sometimes there is fear of a gas attack.'<sup>92</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 94.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 377.

<sup>87</sup> For these two slogans (*Unsere Mauern brechen, unsere Herzen! und Das Leben geht weiter!*) see the photograph in *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 11, and Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 115.

<sup>88</sup> On this, again, see *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 119–22.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 112.

<sup>90</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xii. 252 (8 May 1944).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 259 (9 May 1944). Goebbels goes on to mention that, according to the statistics he has, the air raids had on the territory of the Reich so far cost 122,000 lives and wounded another 231,000, *ibid.* 260.

<sup>92</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6524 (SD reports on home affairs, 11 May 1944).



Already by the spring of 1944 the bombing war was, at least in the heavily attacked industrial regions, increasingly dictating the pattern of daily life for the population. There were now Allied raids almost every day, and from the spring of 1944, as a result of the American air offensive against the fuel industry, they were reaching parts of the Sudetenland and Lower and Upper Silesia that had so far been looked on as 'safe'. 'For one-and-a-half hours, in bright sunshine, more than 1,000 aircraft fly past over our heads. No defence of any kind is offered. It's depressing,' it was commented in the Ruhr in June 1944.<sup>93</sup> The bomber formations passing over the heads of the *Volkgemeinschaft* on their way elsewhere were still stressful even when no bombs were dropped or expected. They caused fear and a sense of helplessness, and a feeling of having no defence against the waves of Flying Fortresses in parade-ground formation:

The white stripes moved slowly along the edge of the sky, calmly, on a straight course, unhurried. They came closer. When our eyes had got used to the bright light we saw, bathed in the sunlight, the bright dots at the tips of the stripes: in neat squadrons they swept past—one, after a couple of minutes another, then a third, a fourth, a fifth . . . People alongside us started counting the tiny silver dots. They had already got to four hundred. But there was still no end to be seen.<sup>94</sup>

## 5. EVERYDAY LIFE 'UNDER THE BOMBS'

The story of what the bombing war and everyday life 'under the bombs' was like has been handed down in a multiplicity of forms: letters written at the time, diaries, official documents, and records of people's experiences, as well as, retrospectively, in oral-history interviews and eyewitness accounts. Seen overall, and against the content of this transmitted history, the impression is often of a stereotyped depiction of personal perceptions that differs only in the details. The great majority of the written record has the account of streets aflame, an all-enveloping background of noise and the sound of explosions, areas on fire, firestorms, and the fronts of houses collapsing; finally, the dead are mentioned—people incinerated, battered, torn apart, in cellars and bunkers and lying in the street.<sup>95</sup> Relating the often horrific experiences provided a way of overcoming the terror and the horror. The personal contact with death, seeing the dead, feeling the fear, pain, suffering, despair, and hopelessness at

<sup>93</sup> Diary by Römer (5 June 1944), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>94</sup> Menzel, *Die Stadt ohne Tod*, 41.

<sup>95</sup> This becomes particularly evident in Friedrich, *Der Brand*, who compiled his work—which has since 2002/3 found wide acceptance in the media and among the public—from such accounts, but who makes no critical analysis of these sources and passes on legends, errors, and speculation unchecked. Friedrich also did not reflect the current state of research, cf. Naumann, *Bombenkrieg*, and *Ein Volk von Opfern?*; see also Ralf Blank's review of Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg*, in *sehепunkte*, 2 (2002), No. 12, of 15 Dec. 2002 (last accessed by author 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.sehепunkte.historicum.net/2002/12/3549071655.html](http://www.sehепunkte.historicum.net/2002/12/3549071655.html).



the idea of the bombing getting worse, the death of friends and family at the front and at home—all of these left indelible traces. The SD noted in May 1944 that 'many *Volksgenossen*' were never free of the impression that 'the howl of the sirens, the thrumming of the attacking aircraft's engines, the noise of the flak, and the crashing of the bombs' had made on them.<sup>96</sup> 'The tunnel shelter is jam-packed and the air in it all used up, so that you think you can't breathe any more,' a despairing mother in the heavily bombed Ruhr wrote in autumn 1944 to her sons, who had been living since the summer of the previous year in a 'safe' small town in Saxony. 'We spend more than half our time down in the tunnel. It's a wretched existence.'<sup>97</sup>

'Life in the bunker', with all that went with it, was in the second half of the war the dominant feature of everyday life, and looms large in the picture of the home front in a great many testimonies. 'I had the feeling of having ended up in an underworld, in filth and disorder . . . the whole impression was horrible. It went well with a sign saying in bright letters "The People are grateful to the Führer."<sup>98</sup> When their own town was not being bombed, people watched in fear and horror as neighbouring towns came under attack. One foreman in the Hagen municipal services, deputizing for the engineer called up to the army, recorded anxiously in his diary in June 1943 a devastating air raid on nearby Wuppertal:<sup>99</sup>

Hundreds of flak guns are roaring away. So far as we can see from this height, there are shells exploding in the sky. The air is humming with many aircraft engines. There are innumerable searchlights wandering round the sky. It's raining shrapnel . . . There are five enemy planes caught in a searchlight cone; they fly towards us, are furiously shot at, and fly past above us. Later we see an aircraft going down in flames. The whole thing goes on for an hour and a half, and then we can go home. In the west the sky is red. Elberfeld is on fire everywhere . . . Long convoys of trucks come through the town, laden with all kinds of household goods. Distraught people sit beside their few belongings. Refugees are arriving at the main station. They stand there with their fire-blackened faces, owning nothing more than they stand up in. It's total misery. The mood in the town is dire. Everywhere there's the question being asked: when will it be our turn?<sup>100</sup>

Whether from Berlin, the Ruhr, Hamburg, or Munich, or later from Leipzig, Dresden, or Königsberg, what the population saw and experienced in the bombing war is similar. And if one includes reports from London, Warsaw, Coventry, Stalingrad, and other cities for whose bombing the Luftwaffe was responsible, it becomes clear that what the inhabitants of most of Europe's larger cities went

<sup>96</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6522 (SD report on home affairs, 11 May 1944).

<sup>97</sup> Letter dated 22 Nov. 1944 from Ilse Thormählen (1906–94), Hagen, to her sons evacuated to Waldheim in Saxony, StadtA Hagen.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted from *Geschichten vom Überleben*, 183–4 (diary entry by Rita H., b. 1922, for 22 Jan. 1945 in Krefeld).

<sup>99</sup> Diary by Römer (15 June 1943, 29 July 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>100</sup> Diary by Römer (25 June 1943), StadtA Hagen.

through between 1939 and 1945 was a collective experience.<sup>101</sup> In the situation reports by the SD, the Wehrmacht propaganda office, Gestapo, and Party and by government authorities, who had the task on the home front of monitoring the public's 'mood' and 'attitude', a large place is devoted to rumours and stories about the bombing.<sup>102</sup> In many towns in the Reich that had remained unaffected by air raids there were rumours and suppositions about this or that reason for the absence of any attack. The people of both Dresden and Hagen, for example, believed that there was a relative of the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill living in their city, so that no attack on it was allowed.<sup>103</sup> Other conjectured reasons for a lack of air raids included alleged secret agreements between the Germans and the Allies on sparing a particular town. There were other rumours concerning prior notice of raids given in Allied leaflets or radio broadcasts; in Essen, for example, the rumour spread in March 1943 that a heavy raid had been announced in an Allied leaflet for a particular night. As a result, according to the SD report, there was already a 'mass migration' of people into the air-raid bunkers in the afternoon of the supposed day of the attack.<sup>104</sup>

'Prophecies' of this kind even led in some towns to a mood of panic among the population. In November 1943 such incidents finally led the Party chancellery to issue an 'executive instruction' to the political leaders and to point out how unfounded such rumours were.<sup>105</sup> It was impossible, however, to put a stop to them. As late as December 1944 the wife of the director of the regional court in Hagen was arrested by the Gestapo for having talked of an impending air raid.<sup>106</sup> All these rumours showed themselves to be the expression of a latent fear and need for an explanation of where the war was going. While they were no threat to the Nazi regime's continued existence, they were able to weaken the home front's will to resist, such that from 1943 the growing occurrence of rumours was carefully recorded and followed up.<sup>107</sup> In many cases rumours and stories provided the background for legends of the air war, of the kind that have been passed down from 1945 to the present day, about the bombing of Dresden and Swinemünde in particular.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See for instance Dines and Knoch, *Deutsche und britische Erfahrungen*.

<sup>102</sup> On the testimonies handed down see *Meldungen aus dem Reich; Das letzte halbe Jahr; Meldungen aus Münster; Die Partei hört mit*; Steinert, *Hitler's War*.

<sup>103</sup> Petersen, *Aus schwerer Zeit*, 44; Bergander, *Dresden*, 88.

<sup>104</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii. 4983 (No. 369, 22 Mar. 1943).

<sup>105</sup> Executive instruction No. 7 from the PK, 6 Nov. 1943, included in Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 112 (fig. 59).

<sup>106</sup> Minute from the minister's office, Landrat Dr Hoffmann, for SS-Standartenführer Dr Brandt, 8 Feb. 1945, BA, NS 19/703.

<sup>107</sup> See for example *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6640-4 (report to the PK, 14 July 1944).

<sup>108</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 210-31; Schnatz, *Tiefflieger*; Helmut Schnatz, 'Dresden des Nordens? Der Luftangriff auf Swinemünde am 12. März 1945', in: *historicum.net*, 24 Nov. 2003 (last accessed by author 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.bombenkrieg.historicum.net/thema/swinemuende.html](http://www.bombenkrieg.historicum.net/thema/swinemuende.html). An uncritical acceptance of air war legends is offered, inter alia for Swinemünde, in Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 170-5.

People on the home front were especially influenced by enemy propaganda. From the start of the war the Allies had done everything they could, by means of leaflets and radio broadcasts, to keep the Germans informed, but also at the same time to 'mould opinion' and undermine 'fighting morale' as effectively as possible.<sup>109</sup> Leaflet-raid propaganda in particular gave the German police and the Nazi leadership immense problems. Between 1939 and 1945, over Germany alone, the Allied air forces dropped leaflets by the tonne.<sup>110</sup> Only a few hours after the British declaration of war on Germany, during the night of 3/4 September 1939, a twin-engined aircraft took off to go and drop over western Germany millions of leaflets with the title 'Britain's warning to the German people'.<sup>111</sup> During almost every air raid on a German town between 1940 and 1945 leaflets fell on the bombed area at the same time, and towards the end of the war rural areas and small towns received the leaflet propaganda as well. During just one raid on Dortmund on 12 March 1945 well over 1.5 million leaflets were aimed at the population,<sup>112</sup> while during those on Berlin or Hamburg the number dropped was several times higher.

Possessing Allied leaflets was not explicitly punishable, but reproducing any that were found and passing on their content certainly was—doing this came before the special courts as 'spreading malicious rumours' and 'subverting the fighting spirit of the troops', and could merit a death sentence. Basically, any leaflet that was found had, according to the instructions from the police, to be marked clearly by the finder as 'enemy propaganda' and handed in at once to the authorities and Party offices.<sup>113</sup> In April 1944 Himmler, as minister for the interior and chief of police, issued a separate decree that made even the possession of such leaflets illegal and an indictable offence. Yet it was never at any time possible for the German authorities and the Party to keep an effective check on the circulation of Allied leaflets among the population, let alone prevent it entirely. A few people even managed for years systematically to collect the leaflets dropped on their town in large numbers, and store them in secret, preserving them after the war and up to the present day.<sup>114</sup> In the final months of the war the leaflets, and a great many regularly air-dropped news-sheets, became on the home front an important source of information for the

<sup>109</sup> Buchbender and Schuh, *Die Waffe*.

<sup>110</sup> Nearly all leaflets dropped over Germany by the Allies during the Second World War, together with a description of how leaflet propaganda was organized, can be found in *Flugblattpropaganda*. Thanks are due to Dr Klaus Kirchner, Erlangen, for other information and references. His extensive collection of leaflets has since 2002 been lodged in the manuscripts department of the Berlin Staatsbibliothek.

<sup>111</sup> Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 22–3. The leaflet is reproduced in *Flugblattpropaganda*, i. 2–3.

<sup>112</sup> Blank, 'Die Stadt Dortmund', 109 n. 321.

<sup>113</sup> *Flugblattpropaganda*, vii. 53.

<sup>114</sup> Many individual leaflets and collections of them are held by local and regional archives, and by museums. The Historisches Centrum in Hagen has, for example, a collection of leaflets made between 1941 and 1945 by a youth aged 18 when the war ended.

public and for soldiers.<sup>115</sup> The newspaper *Nachrichten für die Truppe* [News for the Troops] distributed daily from the autumn of 1944 was particularly successful. After the war the Allies made detailed studies of what the costly leaflet propaganda effort had achieved.<sup>116</sup>

Especially in the war's closing phase the inhabitants of the more heavily bombed regions had direct sight of a propaganda leaflet at least once. In many areas, towards the end of the war, stories went the rounds of leaflets announcing certain of the Allies' military and political plans.<sup>117</sup> A few editions of leaflets destined for the foreign workforce were aimed at increasing resistance among these target groups. Leaflets and 'black propaganda' products, in particular forged official notices and effective 'arson packs' with instructions for use in several languages, were from 1943 designed to spread anxiety among the public, damage the economy, and provoke costly counter-reactions by the German authorities.<sup>118</sup> In 1943 the minds of both the population and the SD were preoccupied by rumours of leaflets with rhymes presaging forthcoming raids, along the lines of 'Münchener fahrt in die Berge oder kauft Särge' [Munichers, you'd best move off into the mountains—or buy a coffin] and 'Hagen du liegst in einem Loch, aber finden werden wir dich doch' [Hagen, you're tucked in a fold in the ground—but don't think it means that you can't be found].<sup>119</sup>

Given the food supply situation on the home front that worsened from 1942/3, the counterfeit ration cards dropped in massive quantities presented the German authorities with a far from negligible problem. In April 1943, for example, the regional food office for the province of Westphalia at Münster was forced to announce in the newspapers that large numbers of forged ration cards for troops on leave had been dropped.<sup>120</sup> To be able to tell forged cards from real ones, the official issuing offices were obliged from then on to confirm validity with a seal and the date of issue. Even this, however, was unable to prevent the circulation of effective forgeries bearing the seal, date of issue, and other features.

<sup>115</sup> See for instance *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 335, 361. <sup>116</sup> *Flugblattpropaganda*, vii. 71 and i. 68–9.

<sup>117</sup> *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 172, 300, 335, 361.

<sup>118</sup> *Flugblattpropaganda*, vii, figs. 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 45. In September 1943 a purported appeal by the Gauleiter of East Prussia, Erich Koch, about the imminent removal of Hitler from office was distributed; its appearance and content were so deceptively 'genuine' that it caused quite some unrest, see *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5806 (SD reports on home affairs, 27 Sept. 1943).

<sup>119</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5805 (SD reports on home affairs, 27 Sept. 1943). It was impossible to tell whether these were 'black propaganda' by the Allies or rumours arising within the population.

<sup>120</sup> *Tremonia: Westdeutsche Volkszeitung* of 6 Apr. 1943. In the Gladbeck area, for instance, following a large-scale raid on Essen on 12/13 Mar. 1943, large quantities of counterfeit ration cards bearing the imprint of the Düsseldorf Food and Economy Office were discovered; on the night of 26/7 Apr., besides the ordinary leaflets, numerous forgeries were found with the stamp of the Dortmund food office, StadtA Gladbeck, coll. C 413 (Kriegschronik). During an American daylight raid on Hagen on 28 Feb. 1945 large quantities of forged Reisemarks (a special currency for paying for travel inside Germany) and ration cards for troops on leave were dropped, StadtA Hagen, coll. Ha 1, 8560.

In the latter years of the war railway journeys became increasingly an adventure with an uncertain outcome. The public's experience of travelling was dominated by diversions, overcrowded trains, and the danger of being caught in a railway station during an air raid. 'The express, through train is jam-packed. Passengers are still clambering in through the windows', starts the account of a journey from the Ruhr to Frankfurt-am-Main that lasted almost two days.<sup>121</sup>

We stop in Opladen. The rest of the journey is in buses. After a long wait one of these arrives. Hundreds of people rush for it. Children and women being crushed are screaming, men are swearing. Everyone is loaded down with suitcases and boxes. Many are carrying bedclothes. A couple of soldiers are sitting on the roof of the bus . . . We travel for an hour to Cologne. Thousands of people are crowded onto the platform. Standing next to me is a heavily pregnant women with two toddlers, plus luggage; she is weeping . . . A train pulls in. There's a wild surge forward . . . the train is overcrowded. The platform is still packed with grumbling people. The railway police haul a few people out of the brake-van and off the running-boards, and we move off . . . In Bonn there's a real punch-up in our carriage.

In one overcrowded compartment the traveller notes: 'A drawing in chalk. A gallows, with a swastika hanging from it. Everyone sees it, but no one wipes it off.'

<sup>121</sup> Röner diary (6 July 1943), StadtA Hagen, also for what follows.

### III. 'Fully Serving the Defence Effort': The Administration, Police, and Courts

#### I. LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE AIR WAR, 1943–1945

'THE administration . . . is finished. We're muddling along, both with inadequate and incompetent staff and in what we achieve, since when it comes down to it we're very often after a long and laborious process having to tell the homeless that we can't do what they want,' was the Essen city treasurer's comment on the city's local authority administration in April 1943.<sup>1</sup>

Already before the war the local authorities had been closely integrated in the precautionary ARP measures.<sup>2</sup> From 1943 on, in the 'air war crisis areas', the British area bombing raids in particular presented the government and local administrations with a great many problems. The destruction of official buildings, working equipment, and most of all its records increasingly crippled a public administrative system that had in any case already been weakened by a lack of staff.<sup>3</sup> To the outside world, nonetheless, the local authorities continued to be 'fully serving the defence effort against the effects of the enemy's terror raids'.<sup>4</sup>

As the person in charge of immediate measures in an emergency, the mayor or burgomaster was responsible for the measures to be taken immediately after an air raid to deal with the crisis conditions. The municipalities were more and more often being tasked with managing temporary measures, governed by ordinances and imposed organizational structures, though without in the event being capable of doing what was actually needed. The mass evacuation of women and children from the 'air war crisis areas' that began in the summer of 1943 did, it is true, substantially reduce the size of the population, yet that in no way reduced the administration's general expenditure, which in the case of the children's evacuation scheme (KLV) was met mainly by the Party and school authorities. Two weeks after the devastating air raids on Hamburg between 25 July and 3 August 1943 the authorities were still short of 260 staff for the work of taking stock of the damage that had been done. Of the original 2,500 staff in the Hamburg commerce and food office, only 990 were at their posts three weeks after the raids.<sup>5</sup> In Krefeld, four days after the first heavy

<sup>1</sup> Monthly report of Essen city treasurer Karl Hahn, Apr. 1943, 143, StadtA Essen.

<sup>2</sup> See Lemke, 'Luftschutz', 330–3.

<sup>3</sup> A basic work on city administrations in Germany is Matzerath, *Selbstverwaltung*. On personnel developments in the public administration see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 958–60.

<sup>4</sup> Boundaries of responsibility, circular from the ObdL's working party on ARP, 17 Dec. 1942, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 103 06810 to 103 06812.

<sup>5</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5867 (SD report on home affairs, 11 Oct. 1943).

air raid on 21/2 June 1943, only seventy-eight out of some 2,000 staff in the local administration were back at work.<sup>6</sup> In Hagen the commander of the civil defence police was complaining, in October 1943, that for days on end none of the city's government offices felt it was their responsibility to count and identify the hundreds of dead from a bombing raid, or to see to putting them in coffins and burying them.<sup>7</sup>

The burial of air-raid victims was a task for the municipality; the memorial ceremonies and 'care' of the population, on the other hand, were taken in charge by the NSDAP. Already after the first air raids in the summer of 1940 the Party made use of the burials to construct an outright 'cult of the dead'. At the beginning of and during the war, the local authorities planted 'groves of honour' for those already interred and (German) victims still to come. Right up to the end of the war the Party held memorial ceremonies in cemeteries and these 'groves of honour'.<sup>8</sup> In press reports and in the eulogies the real intention was to make heroes of those killed in air raids. They were termed 'war heroes', and meant to give the feeling of a death that for the *Volksgemeinschaft* and relatives was honourable and had purpose, on a par with a soldier's death at the front.<sup>9</sup> The Party sought in this way to stiffen the survivors' will to fight on, and the memorial ceremonies for those killed in the air raids showed themselves to be Party self-publicity and propaganda events. The relatives were allotted the role of stage extras, to maintain for the outside world the appearance of a close-knit 'national community united by fate'.

The municipal employees and the staff of the criminal police and cemeteries had—together with concentration-camp inmates, prisoners of war, and forced labourers—a gruesome task; they had to identify and bury the large number of dead as quickly as possible, in order to prevent an outbreak of disease. 'Day after day, hour after hour, the trucks smothered in lime dust rolled with their dreadful load to the cemeteries,' wrote a Hamburg woman after the GOMORRAH raids in August 1943. 'Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands were laid packed side by side in the mass graves. Stripped to the waist, the eastern workers and concentration-camp prisoners dug and dug in the scorching, poison-laden heat, and their spades could not keep up with making space for all those who came and came.'<sup>10</sup> A typical feature of the situation was the special rations of alcohol, cigarettes, and food in the form of 'extra heavy labour' supplements for those working in the cemetery offices. Those employed at the main cemetery in Dortmund, for instance, received generous special allocations, as they

<sup>6</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv, 5867 (SD report on home affairs, 11 Oct. 1943).

<sup>7</sup> War diary of the Hagen ARP police, ii, entry for 1 Oct. 1943, StadtA Hagen, coll. Ha 1, 12477.

<sup>8</sup> A sample programme for burial ceremonies appears in *Die neue Gesellschaft: Das Parteiarchiv für nationalsozialistische Feier- und Freizeitgestaltung*, 10 (1944), 241–9.

<sup>9</sup> See Behrenbeck, *Kult um die toten Helden*, 492–533.

<sup>10</sup> Gretl Büttner, 'Zwischen Leben und Tod', quoted from *Hamburg* 1943, 33.



'amidst an ever-growing number of corpses in all stages of decomposition and every imaginable mutilation still managed fairly well to keep track of things', and 'only seldom showed signs of mental strain'.<sup>11</sup>

In March 1944 Hitler prohibited the burying of *Volksgenossen* in mass graves if the relatives wanted a private interment in the family vault;<sup>12</sup> mass graves nevertheless remained the rule. After the devastating raids on Dresden more than 6,800 corpses had to be cremated on the Altmarkt by an SS team, although this was clearly an exceptional case.<sup>13</sup> Forced labourers and prisoners of war, especially those from south-eastern and eastern Europe, were as a matter of principle buried in mass graves. Irrespective of religious custom and personal wishes, 'eastern workers' and later other foreigners as well were from the summer of 1943 disposed of in crematoria, so as to 'save space' in the graveyards.<sup>14</sup>

The guidelines and measures for dealing with the aftermath of air raids that were drawn up by the municipal and government authorities from 1941/2 involved the NSDAP and its divisions right from the planning stage. Already by two months after war began the NSDAP had been allocated the 'welfare of the population';<sup>15</sup> 'Party action' was to deal with the repercussions that were feared from future bombing. The remit, obviously deliberately couched in wording open to wide interpretation, changed during the last three years of the war; 'Party action' became a central element in the overcoming of the consequences of an air attack. The Gauleiters, in their additional capacity as defence commissioners (*Reichsverteidigungskommissar*, RVK), also played a part in this development.<sup>16</sup> From 1943 onwards the municipal and government administrative machinery, frequently overwhelmed after air raids, often took a back seat on the home front when it came to carrying out real tasks like registering, counselling, and feeding the population and dealing with their bomb damage claims. In heavily bombed cities and regions the NSDAP, organized right down to the lower levels of society with its bases and representatives even inside blocks of apartments, and moreover because of its personnel able to react flexibly, took over together with its divisions an ever greater share of tasks from the public administrators.<sup>17</sup> In August 1943 the deputy Gauleiter and defence commissioner in Essen, Fritz Schießmann, voiced his opinion of this development: 'Already today it is clearly evident that the tasks in this area

<sup>11</sup> Application by Dortmund main cemetery for special allocations, 29 May 1945, StadtA Dortmund, coll. 424-47.

<sup>12</sup> Circular by Gau propaganda chief for Westphalia South, 7 Mar. 1944, StadtA Herne, Wanne-Eickel coll., Akte Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung von Brandbomben.

<sup>13</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 225-6.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Regierungspräsidenten Arnsberg, 3 Aug. 1942, StadtA Hagen, cremations register of Delstern crematorium (1943/44). In Hagen in December 1944 more than forty Italians killed in an air raid were cremated, despite the military chaplain involved and the inhabitants of the Italian camp having protested and on religious grounds called for them to be buried.

<sup>15</sup> *RGBI* I, 1940, 45-6.

<sup>16</sup> Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar', 203-4.

<sup>17</sup> See Arnim Nolzen in the present volume.

[caring for the population after air raids] can be coped with only by the Party, which has distinguished itself through its flexibility and mobility in all divisions.<sup>18</sup> Yet even in totally destroyed major cities the municipal staff were still in April 1945 carrying on with the business of day-to-day administration, such as setting the dates for issuing ration cards and working out plans for reconstruction, with the result that when the Allies invaded they were able to call on a municipal and government administration that, albeit with a depleted staff, was still 'functional'. The Allied air raids had a long-term effect on the machinery of bureaucracy, but right up to the end of the war were unable to break down entirely the administrative procedures and structures.

In matters of government and municipal administration the Reich defence commissioners played an important role. Hitler had created the post of the RVK at the very beginning of the war.<sup>19</sup> The RVK was designed to provide coordination at the middle level of government administration, and was combined with the Party office of Gauleiter.<sup>20</sup> During the Second World War the Gauleiters, in their additional function as RVKs, occupied in their various territories an important, indeed key position as mediators in the area of tension between the political rulers and the government administration.<sup>21</sup> Because of his considerable political powers and opportunities for exerting influence, a Gauleiter could guide the administrative system in his region in the interests of the Party, something that was indeed basically wanted of him even though it ran counter to the official separation between Party and state.<sup>22</sup> The RVKs also increasingly often coordinated and organized dealing with the aftermath of an air raid. From 1943 they as a rule had their own command bunker, and staff who after raids identified the towns affected so as to provide logistical support. After experience of the first heavy bombing on cities the RVKs set up, from June 1942, Gau action staffs to 'deal with serious emergencies after air raids'.<sup>23</sup> These Gau action staffs were drawn at regional level from decision-makers in a variety of administrations, civil and military authorities,

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of a meeting in Essen on 5 Aug. 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP-Kreisleitung Oberhausen, No. 2, ii.

<sup>19</sup> The functions and tasks, and the background to the appointment, are dealt with fully by Tepe, 'Der Reichsverteidigungskommissar'. On the problems surrounding the relationship between administration and National Socialism see Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*.

<sup>20</sup> There were problems in agreeing areas of responsibility, and personal animosities among the Gauleiters who in certain military districts were made subordinate to an office colleague as RVK (as, for instance, in military district VI (Münster) with the Gaue of Düsseldorf, Cologne-Aachen, Essen, Westphalia North, and Westphalia South). These led, in November 1942, to the Reich defence districts being aligned with the territory of the Gaue: ordinance on the RVK and the standardization of the economic administration, 16 Nov. 1942, *RGBl.* I, 1942, 649.

<sup>21</sup> Basic sources on the Gauleiters include Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter*; Ziegler, *Gaue*; Düwell, 'Gauleiter'.

<sup>22</sup> For an example of this see Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar', 204.

<sup>23</sup> General plenipotentiary for Reich administration to RVKs, 6 May 1942 *re* preparatory planning for immediate aid measures to be taken after major air raids, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 103 06778-103 06785.

the Party apparatus, and Party divisions, together with representatives of the employers' associations. From the allocation of tasks and responsibilities in preventing, resisting, and overcoming the effects of attacks from the air under the central supervision of the RVKs (and Gauleiters), it is clear that in the summer of 1942 those within the Party and administration were expecting a further intensification of the air raids.

## 2. THE AIR-RAID PROTECTION POLICE AND GESTAPO

Involved in overcoming the consequences of air raids were the governmental police authorities, the Gestapo, and those sections of the municipal administration who were concerned with maintaining security and public order.<sup>24</sup> An important role in dealing with the damage resulting from air raids was played by the whole of the fire-brigades system, which from 1937 had been organized on police lines.<sup>25</sup> In municipalities with a state police administration the chief of police in question acted at head of local ARP, while in others this was the mayor or burgomaster. Whoever was in charge of the police also acted as 'head of priority measures', coordinating all the work of digging for survivors and clearing away debris. Responsible for policing were, at middle level from September 1939, the commander of the regular police (*Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei*, BdO), previously called *Inspekteur der Ordnungspolizei*, and the senior SS and police leader (*Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*, HSSPF). The BdO's responsibility in military district VI (Münster)—the largest police district in the Reich—thus covered the government districts of Aachen, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Arnsberg, Münster, Minden, and Osnabrück, as well as the free state of Lippe plus, from 1940, the Belgian districts of Eupen and Malmedy.<sup>26</sup>

In the summer of 1942 the numerous bombing raids and resultant burden on the fire brigades and disaster services in the top-category ARP localities led to the formation of a civil defence police force, drawn from full-time members of the security and assistance service (*Sicherheits- und Hilfsdienst*, SHD).<sup>27</sup> At the high point of the bombing war the national and municipal police were reinforced with units of the NSDAP, such as SA rescue squads, fast-response units from the Hitler Youth and HJ fire brigade, and troops from the Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht, as well as the Organisation Todt. The closing years of the war increasingly saw use made of foreign workers, prisoners of war, and concentration-camp prisoners;<sup>28</sup> the problem was to keep on top of the work of digging out the dead and wounded from the ruins, clearing the rubble, and putting out the fires. Already before the war industrial firms, the Reichsbahn,

<sup>24</sup> On policing in the Third Reich see Friedrich, *Die Polizei in NS-Staat*; on the police's function in ARP, Lemke, *Luftschutz*, 321–30.

<sup>25</sup> A prime source is Lemke, *Luftschutz*. On organization and activity 1939–45 see Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*; Rumpf, *Der hochrote Hahn*; Linhardt, *Feuerwehr in Luftschutz*; *Polizei im Einsatz*.

<sup>26</sup> *Polizei in Einsatz*, 10; on the BdO in general see *In Auftrag*.

<sup>27</sup> Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 126.

<sup>28</sup> See Karola Fings in the present volume.

and the Reichspost had set up their own air-raid protection units in the factory ARP and railway and postal ARP, and these too cooperated closely with the civil defence police. What was termed self-protection was organized in the Reich Air Civil Defence League (*Reichsluftschutzbund*, RLB) under the aegis of the aviation ministry.<sup>29</sup> In the summer of 1943 the RLB (with at that time around 23 million members) came under the control of the Party, which used it as its own ARP force in parallel with the government and municipal civil defence police; a year later the NSDAP took it over officially as a division of the Party.<sup>30</sup>

While the task of the regular and civil defence police had to do, at least within the Reich borders, mainly with precautionary ARP measures and coping with the aftermath of air raids, the work of the Gestapo on the home front was of a different kind. The Gestapo had already in the pre-war years established itself in its function of monitoring and prosecuting.<sup>31</sup> With the unleashing of the Second World War the prosecution covered a variety of additional offences, including 'malicious crimes' such as spreading rumours about the air war and looting after air raids. From 1942 it also kept watch in particular over the employment of foreigners<sup>32</sup> which, because of the pursuit of forced labourers trying to escape after bombing raids and during work on clearing rubble and digging in the ruins, was linked with the ARP measures.<sup>33</sup> Towards the end of the war executions, of both Germans and foreigners, were one of the Gestapo's main activities.<sup>34</sup>

The bombing led, as the war moved to a close, to symptoms of disintegration in the *Volkgemeinschaft* that the National Socialists saw as being a close-knit, united entity; this was especially so in regions that were suffering particularly intensive attacks. In the autumn of 1944 'gangs', made up of foreign workers and German youths, appeared in the large bomb-damaged cities of Rhineland-Westphalia. The teenagers known as 'Edelweiss pirates', active in many towns in the Rhineland and Ruhr,<sup>35</sup> and the 'forming of gangs' among the foreign workforce, presented the Gestapo with fresh problems. Armed groups of youths, for instance, roamed through a Cologne that had been largely destroyed by innumerable raids, and even planned attacks on the Gestapo and Party officials, some of which were in fact carried out.<sup>36</sup> In the final phase of the war the Gestapo formed special units that acted ruthlessly against 'gangs' and 'undesirable elements'. The model for this was provided by the *Einsatzgruppen* and the experience amassed between 1939 and 1944

<sup>29</sup> On the Reich air protection league see Lemke, *Luftschutz*, 314–20.

<sup>30</sup> See Armin Nolzen in the present volume.

<sup>31</sup> *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität; Die Gestapo in Zweiten Weltkrieg*; Johnson, *The Nazi Terror*.

<sup>32</sup> Leissa and Schröder, 'Zwangsarbeit in Düsseldorf', 275–321; Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo', 176–93; Heusler, *Ausländereinsatz*, 288–97; Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, 133–50.

<sup>33</sup> See Karola Fings in the present volume.

<sup>34</sup> For examples see Paul, 'Diese Erschießungen'; Lotfi, 'KZ der Gestapo', 292–310.

<sup>35</sup> Rusinek, *Gesellschaft*, 75–93; Paul, 'Diese Erschießungen', 548.

<sup>36</sup> Rusinek, *Gesellschaft*, 268–70, 286–7, 328.

by police commanders' staffs in the occupied countries of south-eastern and eastern Europe. A great many members of the Gestapo had, from their 'time in the east', familiarity with the business of shooting hostages and carrying out executions. The mass murders carried out by local Gestapo units between October 1944 and April 1945, in western Germany especially, mirrored the extermination that had been practised in the occupied territories ever since the Poland campaign, and was now being applied on the home front.<sup>37</sup>

The natural assumption that with the more intensive bombing the Gestapo was in its death throes proves to be mistaken.<sup>38</sup> Especially at the very end of the war, in many towns even only a few hours before the arrival of the Allied troops, the orders that the bureaucrats had drafted for mass murder were carried out with brutal efficiency. During the bombing war the Gestapo, as an instrument of terror, and the civil defence police as a more restrained body aimed at limiting the damage, operated at two different levels.<sup>39</sup> Since they were both parts of the police structure controlled by the SS the interfaces between them were however fluid, as may be seen from just one example. The commander of the fire police in Bochum, an SS-Sturmabführer with a university doctorate, believed in January 1945 that he had caught a Soviet prisoner of war, engaged on rubble clearance, stealing a 'nickel-plated salt cellar'; he shot the man 'on the spot'—without any further investigation. Later he filed with the chief of police who was his superior merely a report on an order having been carried out.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. THE CRIMINAL COURTS AND THE BOMBING WAR

In the fifth year of the war, when the enemy is engaged in a general attack on the Reich on all fronts, the best of our nation are risking their lives at the front, and the homeland stands behind them with all its strength, upholding the criminal law with special vigilance has to ensure right behaviour on the home front and the steadfastness of the nation's unity and will to fight on . . . Anyone who takes advantage of enemy air raids, the blackout, or any other of the abnormal circumstances of war to enrich himself is first and foremost not just preying on the wealth of others, but is committing a breach of trust against the *Volksgemeinschaft* which in time of war can no longer protect its property as it did before.<sup>41</sup>

This was how, early in 1944, the justice ministry (*Reichsministerium der Justiz*, RMJ) described the role of applying the criminal code in wartime. Between 1939 and 1943 the number of death sentences had risen from 99 to 5,363,

<sup>37</sup> See Paul, 'Diese Erschießungen', 557–8.

<sup>38</sup> On the safeguarding of documents and equipment and setting up of fall-back premises by the Gestapo and RSHA in connection with the air raids on Hamburg and Berlin see Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*, 698–701.

<sup>39</sup> Lemke, *Luftschutz*, 328–30.

<sup>40</sup> Report by commander of fire police dated 16 Jan. 1945 re shooting of a foreign looter, StadtA. Bochum, coll. Bo 37/40.

<sup>41</sup> 'Die Strafrechtspflege in fünften Kriegsjahr' (early 1944), BA R 22/4692.

an illustration of the more radical application of justice on the home front. Among those condemned to death in 1943, for instance, were three alleged to have refused assistance to persons 'harmed by the bombing', 938 'dangerous habitual criminals' some of whom had made use of the blackout during an air-raid warning to carry out their deeds, and 182 persons accused of looting from bomb-damaged houses.<sup>42</sup>

Nazi justice during the Second World War was based in particular on the special courts. Bodies like these had already, during the consolidation phase of National Socialism after 1933, become a permanent feature of the increasingly politicized and ideologized jurisdiction. After the outbreak of war summary courts of this kind were newly established in many places, in order to be able to handle a growing number of allegations and proceedings. One of the most important legal instruments with which the courts and special jurisdictions operated on the home front was the 'enemies of the people ordinance' (*Volksschädlings-Verordnung*, VVO) of 5 September 1939, which was used for instance against looters.<sup>43</sup> The 'radio broadcasts ordinance', also enacted at the start of the war, was aimed at those listening to 'enemy transmitters', and what was termed 'malicious conduct' including things like passing on political jokes and rumours. The 'protection of war potential ordinance' (*Wehrkraftschutzverordnung*) of 25 November 1939 regulated dealings with prisoners of war. The 'Poles and Jews penal code order' created a special body of law applying to Polish and Jewish defendants. Finally, mention should be made of the 'war economy ordinance' (*Kriegswirtschaftsverordnung*) of 4 September 1939. Between 1939 and 1945 the special courts alone claimed the lives of tens of thousands.<sup>44</sup> After the 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on 30/1 May 1942 the justice ministry issued a decree on how cases of looting were to be dealt with. This allowed the presidents of the superior district courts to set up summary special courts for the purpose of 'passing judgment on looters on the spot'.<sup>45</sup>

The number of those of Reich-German nationality brought before the courts under the VVO as looters and condemned to death was particularly high. In addition to them there were many from the foreign workforce—predominantly Poles or 'eastern workers'—accused or convicted of looting, with whom the courts did not even have to be concerned: they were handed over to the Gestapo's special jurisdiction for execution, or shot at once on the spot by the police or Party officials. Death sentences were the rule for looters, and were announced to the public by the court authorities to serve as a deterrent.<sup>46</sup> Once someone suspected of looting was caught up in the machinery of justice there was seldom any escape.

<sup>42</sup> See statistics, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1939, 1679.

<sup>44</sup> Niermann, *Die Durchsetzung politischer und politisierter Straffjustiz*; Wüllenweber, *Sondergerichte; Straffjustiz in totalen Krieg*; Roeser, *Das Sondergericht Essen*; Keldungs, *Das Duisburger Sondergericht*; Mechler, *Kriegsalltag; Standgericht der inneren Front*.

<sup>45</sup> Niermann, *Die Durchsetzung politischer und politisierter Straffjustiz*, 339–40.

<sup>46</sup> A few examples from contemporary press reports appear in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 473–7, 486.



In 1940 a respectable workman brought before the special court in Bremen for the alleged theft of two pairs of leggings and a purse containing 80 Reichsmarks got off with a year and eight months in prison,<sup>47</sup> while in September 1944 a ship's cook with a previous record was sentenced to death by the same court after filching cash, ration cards, clothing, and other items from air-raided cellars in Darmstadt.<sup>48</sup>

Nazi justice seldom tended to leniency, and handed down draconian penalties. Its terrorizing nature is made specially clear by questionable death sentences on the young, from which the courts did not desist despite protests by the public and even by the SS security service. In March 1944, 18-year-old Ilse Mitze came before the special court in Dortmund accused of having, after the first heavy raid on Hagen on 1 October 1943, stolen a few items of underwear—eight ladies' vests, five pairs of knickers, and thirteen pairs of stockings.<sup>49</sup> On the night of the raid the girl had been working hard into the early morning hours, rescuing people dug out from the ruins. Her employer did describe her as being 'difficult' and having 'a sweet tooth', but nevertheless said she was 'industrious and respectable'. Because of a few incidents arising from not getting on with those around her the girl had for quite some time been under official surveillance. The Hagen medical officer of health, asked by the Dortmund special court for an opinion, described the accused as a 'stupid, impudent, and mendacious psychopath', thus matching the ideological and racial-biology line being pursued by the court's chairman. Ilse Mitze was—despite all the points that spoke *for* the girl—sentenced to death as a 'looter'. The population received this verdict with incomprehension, and even the SD in Hagen raised objections to the sentence and asked for a pardon to be considered.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless Ilse Mitze was beheaded in Dortmund in May 1944, and the carrying out of the sentence publicized by the court authorities on large posters. After the execution, one Hagen inhabitant wrote in his diary: 'Today it has been announced, by means of posters with the well-known red seal, that a 19-year-old girl has been put to death because on the night of the raid on 1 October she "stole" a few pairs of stockings. This harsh sentence has caused great indignation everywhere . . . For all the strictness that is doubtless very necessary these days, the court has with this verdict struck a heavy blow at people's sense of justice, and done the state as the upholder of the law more harm than good.'<sup>51</sup>

The courts and police dealt with looting cases with a rapidity that, in public authorities, was astonishing. After the air raid on Essen on 5/6 March 1943 69-year-old Kasimir Petrolinas, from Lithuania, unearthed from the ruins of a

<sup>47</sup> *Straffjustiz in totalen Krieg*, 233.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 280–3.

<sup>49</sup> Witte, 'Drei Hagener "Volksschädlinge"', 400–5.

<sup>50</sup> Niermann, *Die Durchsetzung politischer und politisierter Straffjustiz*, 374.

<sup>51</sup> Petersen, *Aus schwerer Zeit*, 81 (16/17 May 1944).



shop three damaged metal bowls, each worth RM1, that he wanted for his own use.<sup>52</sup> He was spotted by a policeman doing this, and arrested. The quickly convened special court in Essen thereupon sentenced Petrolinas to death, and a few hours later after telephoned confirmation by the RMJ had the sentence carried out by a twelve-man firing squad—all done with a speed that made the trial a farce. The three- to four-week stay of execution allowed to condemned persons from the summer of 1943 gave only the appearance of their being able to lodge an appeal for clemency, this being overwhelmingly rejected out of hand. ‘They can’, wrote the *Hamburger Anzeiger* in August 1943, ‘be certain of ruthless eradication.’<sup>53</sup>

In the closing months of the war justice from the courts escalated to become an instrument of the terror used to compel continued resistance. On 15 February 1945 the Reich minister of justice announced the creation of summary courts, to be set up by the Reich defence commissioners ‘at the approach of the enemy’.<sup>54</sup> Together with the military court system and the ‘flying courts martial’ these civilian special courts formed, towards the end of the war, a legalized means of meting out a harsh justice whose real purpose was the physical extermination of the accused, and in the case of the German condemned their ‘eradication’ from the body of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The flying court martial of Maj. Erwin Helm, who in the final months of the war ranged from the Rhine to the Sudetenland in his grey Mercedes, was one such body dispensing arbitrary mock justice;<sup>55</sup> the number of his ‘court’s’ victims in southern Germany alone it is now impossible to tell.

<sup>52</sup> Niermann, *Die Durchsetzung politischer und politisierter Straffjustiz*, 373.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Todesurteile gegen Plünderer’, in *Hamburger Anzeiger*, 19 Aug. 1943, Institut für Zeitungsforschung, Dortmund.

<sup>54</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1945, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 851–2.

## IV. Coping with the Bombing War

### I. CENTRALIZATION OF CIVILIAN AIR WAR MEASURES FROM 1942/1943

Up to 1941/2, civil air defence and dealing with the effects of air raids had been based mainly on the preparations and organizational structures set up in the pre-war years,<sup>1</sup> and it was not until the air war intensified from the spring of 1942 that substantial changes and a reorganization became necessary. Up to the turn of the year 1942/3, the immediate aftermath of air raids could in most cases be coped with at local and regional level;<sup>2</sup> feeding the population and deploying the help and rescue teams were handled by the local administration and relevant chief of police respectively, by the Orpo commander, and also via the NSDAP Kreis and Gau headquarters and the defence commissioners. The 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on 30/1 May 1943 in particular marked a change in the measures adopted thus far. This was seen from then on not only in the feeding and looking after of those affected by the raids, but also in deploying help and rescue teams, implementing civil defence measures, and dealing with the damage. Between 1943 and 1945, during the main phase of the Allied bombing war against the Reich, the interministerial committee on bomb damage (*Interministerieller Luftkriegsschädenausschuß*, ILA) and the Reich inspectorate for civil air war measures took on central functions on the home front. The ILA, which was set up in January 1943, included as the body coordinating all matters relating to the air war representatives from all the ministries, the Wehrmacht, and the Party's divisions.<sup>3</sup>

After Wilhelm Frick as Reich minister of the interior gave up in December 1942 the claim he had initially made to lead it, Hitler in January 1943 appointed Goebbels to chair the ILA. In April Goebbels in turn named as his deputy Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, a department head in the propaganda ministry who had recently returned from a posting in North Africa. The administration of the committee was in the hands of Theodor Ellgering.<sup>4</sup> Through the work of

<sup>1</sup> On this see essentially Lemke, *Luftschutz*; Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*.

<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive documentation with sources and reports can be found in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 11–506; on civil air defence during the war see in most cases Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*; as local studies Beer, *Kriegsalltag*; Ueberschär, *Freiburg*.

<sup>3</sup> Composition of the ILA, BA R 18/922; for its organization and activities see Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*, 607–18.

<sup>4</sup> A report on activities drawn up by Ellgering in 1955 at the request of the federal ministry of the interior can be found in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 429–45. In this, Ellgering presented himself as having initiated the ILA; in fact the ILA was brought into being after the deputy Gauleiter in Düsseldorf, Karl Overhues, had in a memorandum to the Party chancellery in October 1942 suggested a Reich-wide, central supervision of all emergency measures connected with air raids; see letter from M-representative of Gau HQ Düsseldorf to the PK, 8 Oct. 1942, BA R 18/922, 23–6.

the ILA, motorized aid convoys were dispatched after bombing raids to bring clothing, food, and everyday necessities to the victims, and mobile workshops and kitchens were sent to the cities affected. Its powers went so far as to be able to requisition Wehrmacht stores in order to ensure emergency supplies to the population. By means of regular 'air war dispatches' the ILA issued information, orders, and guidance. The first major deployment of its measures came in the summer of 1943, after the heavy bombing of Hamburg and towns and cities in western Germany.

The opportunities for exerting influence that the ILA gave Goebbels are demonstrated particularly clearly by the heavy raid on Kassel on 22 October 1943. The concentrated dropping of stick and liquid incendiaries created a firestorm that in a massive conflagration destroyed more than 63 per cent of the town's residential area.<sup>5</sup> Almost 6,000 died, and between 100,000 and 120,000 inhabitants were bombed out of their homes. Goebbels immediately sent his ILA deputy, Berndt, to Kassel;<sup>6</sup> as soon as he arrived in the city Berndt sketched out for Goebbels the catastrophic situation there, and reported what was in his opinion the Gauleiter and RVK Karl Weinrich's manifest failure to deal with it. The accusations levelled against Weinrich ranged from lack of interest in the sufferings of his *Volksgenossen*, through inadequate preparations for an air attack, to bringing private interests into the carrying out of his official duties. For Goebbels and Berndt, this showed Weinrich's incompetence in coping with the immediate consequences of the raid on Kassel; the head of the ILA made a vehement call on Hitler to relieve the Hesse Gauleiter, RVK, and governor of his posts forthwith. Immediately after the bombing Bormann, head of the Party chancellery, had sent the deputy Gauleiter of Gau Niederrhein, Karl Gerland, to Kassel to take charge, together with the ILA, of dealing with the bomb damage and looking after the population. A few weeks later Hitler appointed Gerland as the new Gauleiter and RVK in Hesse-Nassau; Weinrich was relieved of his post due to 'illness'.

The attack on Kassel however had further consequences, as Goebbels now realized that keeping a constant watch over civil defence and the preparations for air attack was urgently necessary all over the Reich. While the ILA was proving its worth as a central instrument at Reich level for guiding supra-regional emergency measures, the lack of any central body for checking and identifying shortcomings in civil defence, and for introducing preventive measures, was becoming obvious. In November 1943, after the heavy raids on Berlin began, Goebbels's mind turned repeatedly to the idea of setting up such an organization as rapidly as possible, under his own command. For this he made use of the Gauleiter of South Westphalia, Albert Hoffmann, whom he greatly admired and who on the basis of his experience in the battle of the Ruhr from March to July 1941 was seen as one of the leading air war experts among the high-ranking Nazis. Hoffmann was one of the youngest Gauleiters,

<sup>5</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 52-4; Dettmar, *Die Zerstörung Kassels*.

<sup>6</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 160 (24 Oct. 1943), also for what follows.

and on the home front was numbered among the specially committed career officials.<sup>7</sup> On matters of civil air defence, evacuating sections of the population from high-risk areas, and people management in wartime, Hoffmann was consulted as a skilled specialist by others besides Goebbels.<sup>8</sup> Already in November 1943 he travelled to Vienna on Goebbels's behalf to make a close assessment of the city's civil defence measures and preparedness for air attack. Hoffmann's report on the shortcomings he discovered there was devastating, and was put to use by Goebbels in an intrigue against the Gauleiter Baldur von Schirach, who had fallen into disfavour with Hitler.<sup>9</sup>

The Führer order of 10 December 1943 setting up the Reich inspectorate appointed Goebbels as its head, with Hoffmann named as his deputy.<sup>10</sup> Management of the inspectorate was entrusted to Berndt, showing not only from the personnel angle the interconnection there was between the ILA and Reich inspectorate. Up to early 1945 the inspectorate made numerous tours in the Gaue and individual large cities in Germany, as well as in countries under German influence such as Hungary and France. It was not only Berendt and Hoffmann who were involved in these<sup>11</sup>—a number of other Gauleiters took part, including Karl Kaufmann (Hamburg), Josef Grohé (Cologne-Aachen), and Hartmann Lauterbacher (South Hanover-Braunschweig). The inspectorate could, it is true, uncover inadequacies in ARP preparations and in the prevention of air-raid damage; yet it is questionable whether what it discovered led to any real improvements or could be put into effect with any speed. In January 1945, for instance, one of the final inspections in Saxony was carried out by Karl Kaufmann; he found the situation in Dresden, in particular, 'in a very sorry state', which Goebbels blamed on the city's mayor Hans Nieland. In his report to Hitler, Goebbels called for Nieland to be sacked.<sup>12</sup> Nothing however changed in the inadequate civil defence situation in Dresden—there were no bombproof surface bunkers, and the bulk of the population had to use enlarged air-raid shelters in cellars, and slit trenches.<sup>13</sup> The years of neglect of civil defence in Dresden could not be put right within

<sup>7</sup> Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar'.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Hoffmann to Hellmuth Friedrichs, PK, on finding living accommodation for air-raid victims in Hamburg, 25 Aug. 1943, BA NS 6/570; Albert Hoffmann, 'Der Reichsverteidigungskommissar in Zusammenarbeit mit den Befehlshabern der Wehrmacht', n.p. [1943], BA-MA RW 6/412, interpreted and edited in Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 69–71.

<sup>9</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 505 (19 Dec. 1943), 514 (20 Dec. 1943).

<sup>10</sup> Führer decree on the formation of a Reich inspectorate for civil air war measures of 21 Dec. 1943, BA R 43 II/669d. On this also Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x. 515 (20 Dec. 1943), 523 (21 Dec. 1943), 547 (25 Dec. 1943). On the Reich inspectorate see also Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*, 251–2.

<sup>11</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi. 77 (12 Jan. 1944). Already in early January Goebbels was planning to 'reform' the Reich inspectorate as it had proved not to be 'practicable' that Hoffmann should 'do all the work on his own'. For that reason he was intending to bring in a number of the heads of propaganda, *ibid.* 47 (4 Jan. 1944). In January 1944 Hoffmann was out of action for a longish period due to illness, though continuing formally to represent Goebbels in the Reich inspectorate.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xv. 87 (8 Jan. 1945).

<sup>13</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 90–III.

a few weeks; and they were probably partly responsible for the high count of those killed in the raid on 13/14 February 1945.

Both organizations, the ILA and the Reich inspectorate, substantially increased Goebbels's influence. Through his control via these two bodies he played, from 1943, a central role in almost every measure to do with the air war at civilian level. At the same time, he had an overview of the whole broad sweep of what was happening in the air war, unequalled by any other leading Nazi politician except perhaps Albert Speer. This means that Goebbels can be described as the most important political key figure on the home front; for he not only had the fullest information on developments in the bombing war, but enjoyed close contact with the leading personalities and bodies involved—even down to municipal level. The combination of his manifold political and government functions with chairmanship of the ILA and in the Reich inspectorate (in July 1944 he was additionally appointed 'Reich commissioner for total mobilization of resources for war')<sup>14</sup> made him on the home front, when the bombing war was at its peak, one of the Reich's most powerful politicians and decision-makers. Through the ILA and Reich inspectorate Goebbels penetrated, in 1943/4, Göring's existing work and organizational structures as commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, as well as those of Himmler, who as Reich minister of the interior and chief of the German police was also in charge of the entire fire protection and ARP police system. It is however only to a certain extent possible to talk in terms of a centralizing of measures for dealing with the effects of air raids. It was more a case, in the civilian sector in 1943, of responsibilities being redistributed and of supervisory and inspection bodies that were lacking being set up. From 1943 on, the Reich defence commissioners and Gauleiters (Albert Hoffmann in particular must be mentioned) increasingly took on responsibilities in the government civil service sector,<sup>15</sup> a development seen most of all in the area of constructing air-raid shelters for the civilian population.

## 2. CIVIL DEFENCE CONSTRUCTION, AND 'LIFE DOWN IN THE BUNKER'

### (a) *From Large-Scale Programme to Makeshift Measures*

From 1942/3 onwards, daily life as it was lived on the home front moved increasingly down into the air-raid shelter in the cellar, bunker, or tunnel. After the first of the RAF's bombing raids the air-raid shelters that had been constructed by the beginning of the war—predominantly slit trenches, covered splinter-proof trenches, and converted cellars<sup>16</sup>—could no longer ensure

<sup>14</sup> Nolzen, 'Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation', 76–8; Hancock, *National Socialist Leadership*, 138–9.

<sup>15</sup> Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar'.

<sup>16</sup> For a regional example see Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 108–11.

adequate protection. Around the same time as the abandonment of Operation SEALION<sup>17</sup>, it became evident that the Luftwaffe was unable to prevent the Royal Air Force from flying over the Reich and dropping bombs on it.<sup>18</sup> Faced with the prospect of the war with Britain lasting longer, and with an eye to his impending attack on the Soviet Union,<sup>19</sup> Hitler ordered the building of bombproof shelters in selected major cities,<sup>20</sup> in reaction to the RAF's attack on Berlin on 26 August 1940 and further bombing on the following nights.<sup>21</sup>

On 30 September 1940, in a special provision for the Reich capital, Hitler ordered the allocation of building materials, workers, and transport facilities for the construction of up to 2,000 bunkers. Later, this was reduced to 1,000, as the necessary raw materials and workforce could not be assembled.<sup>22</sup> The bunkers were to withstand heavy bombs weighing 1,000 kilograms, and had in particular to be gas-tight. On the other hand the flak towers, isolated examples of which had been erected since the autumn of 1940 in Hamburg, Berlin, and Vienna, were, even when the civilian population were allowed to use them, part not of civil defence but of the military defence construction programme.<sup>23</sup> On 10 October 1940 came the decision on the 'Führer's priority programme' for the building of 'bomb-, debris- and splinter-proof air-raid protection premises'.<sup>24</sup> The building project was an ambitious one, necessitating a correspondingly large bureaucratic machinery and a complex organization. The 'protection premises' were to include underground bunkers, surface shelters, tower bunkers, and shelter tunnels. The bunkers were intended not only to provide protection for people, but also to house important cultural items. Individual cities thus had their own 'art bunker', as at Nuremberg.<sup>25</sup> The Berlin museums stored some of their art treasures in the city's flak bunkers, while excavated caves, remote villages, castles, and fortresses, together with mines and natural caverns such as those in the Harz mountains, the Alps, and the Sauerland, were also used to house the collections from museums, archives, and libraries.<sup>26</sup>

The objective of the priority programme was explained, half a year after it was announced, in a speech in Munich by Kurt Knipfer, since 1933 head of civil defence at the Reich aviation ministry (RLM):<sup>27</sup> 'Thus as part of our bombproof construction there is coming into being a kind of new West Wall built of steel and concrete; the enemy should be aware that once this is completed his attacks will no longer be worth making; for what he is trying to get at with his bombing raids is then no longer reachable.'<sup>28</sup> Besides Hamburg

<sup>17</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, ii. 366–73.

<sup>18</sup> On how the conduct of the air war developed up to 1942 see the chapters by Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, iv. 13–51.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. 240–1.

<sup>21</sup> See Balke, *Der Luftkrieg in Europa*, pt. 1, 160–62.

<sup>22</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 241.

<sup>23</sup> Angerer, *Flakbunker*.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks are due here to Michael Foedrowitz, of Berlin, for valuable information and assistance. On the building of bunkers see Foedrowitz, *Bunkerwelten; Erinnerungsorte aus Beton*; USSBS, Civil Defence Division, Reports 40–47, NA, RG 243.

<sup>25</sup> Schramm, *Bomben auf Nürnberg*, 26–8.

<sup>26</sup> Blank and Marra, *Air-Raid Precautions*.

<sup>27</sup> There is an organizational chart of civil defence at the RLM/ObdL in *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 236.

<sup>28</sup> Knipfer, 'Die Bedeutung des Baues von Luftschutzräumen', 1.



and Berlin, the industrial region of the Rhineland and Westphalia known in Germany and abroad as 'the Vulcan's forge of the Reich' was a special focus of bunker-building. Any major effort on this was, on the other hand, put off for the time being in the industrial areas of Saxony and Upper Silesia, as the thinking of the civil defence planners at that time was that this region need not expect any major British air raids. The background to the priority programme was not solely, as the propaganda presented it, a desire to provide effective protection for women and children, but also the preservation of the German workforce for the war industry—a specially important consideration given the numbers of workers who had been called up to serve in the Wehrmacht.<sup>29</sup>

The administrative control and technical implementation of the priority programme on Reich territory were entrusted to the Reich minister for armament and ammunition (RMfBuM) Fritz Todt, at the same time head of the Organisation Todt (OT).<sup>30</sup> Building bunkers in the Reich's capital, within the 'Berlin Ring', came under the inspector-general of construction Albert Speer, who on 8 February 1942 succeeded Todt after the latter's death in a flying accident. The C-in-C Luftwaffe gave instructions on how the building work was to be done, while the general plenipotentiary for the control of construction (*Generalbevollmächtigte für die Regelung der Bewirtschaftung*, GB-Bau) had charge of the work itself. After 1942 the incompetence of the Luftwaffe leadership in building shelters and preventive measures against damage could no longer be ignored, and was coming under vehement criticism from the public. Civil defence and the building of bunkers increasingly proved to be a millstone around the Luftwaffe leadership's neck, and the source of a great loss of prestige. In the autumn of 1942 the Luftwaffe inspector-general, Field Marshal Erhard Milch, called for the whole system of civil defence against air attack to be brought under a single command and given to Goebbels, hoping in this way to shift all existing and future problems onto the latter's shoulders.<sup>31</sup> This and other demands then led, in January 1943, to the formation of the ILA described earlier. At municipal level the city planning and building offices received their instructions from the ILA's area representative via the chief administrative officer and mayor. The building administrations set up their own civil defence building offices.<sup>32</sup>

Selected for the first wave of building under the programme were sixty-one towns and cities classed as category I civil defence locations, with more than 100,000 inhabitants, under threat of air attack, and having an armaments industry important to the war effort. The second wave, in the spring of 1943, saw only a few more towns added to the list. In most of the 'bunker cities' 19 November 1940 was set as the date for starting the work; the planned date

<sup>29</sup> On recruiting measures and the deployment of the workforce from 1942 to 1944 see essentially Kroener in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 833–1070.

<sup>30</sup> On the OT and construction see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 483–91.

<sup>31</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, viii. 106 (15 Apr. 1943).

<sup>32</sup> A description of organization and implementation, taking Münster as an example, can be found in Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 111–23.



for completing the first wave was July 1941, after which work on the second would start immediately. In fact, the schedule slipped to October 1941; this meant that the target date for completion of the second wave in the summer of 1942 could likewise not be met, and the bunkers were not ready until well into 1943. The third wave, ordered on 27 May 1943 as a result of the heavy raids on cities in western Germany, began under severe difficulties due to inadequate supplies of raw materials and a shortage of labour.

By the end of January 1942, over the whole of Germany, a total of 1,215 bunkers were 'structurally complete' (that is to say, still without any of the fittings such as gas-tight doors and ventilation equipment), and a further 513 were still under construction. Up to then, 4.8 million cubic metres of concrete had been poured,<sup>33</sup> a consumption of material roughly equivalent to the volume of concrete used in ten large U-boat pens of the kind built from 1941 along the Atlantic coastline and in shipbuilding towns in the north of Germany. By May 1943 the priority programme could offer the following figures: work had been started on 1,619 buildings, with 199 of them the concrete was at that date still being poured, and 1,343 had been pronounced 'structurally complete'. Of the planned 5.5 million cubic metres of reinforced concrete almost 4.3 million had so far been used on bombproof constructions, plus a further 1.7 million cubic metres of tamped concrete.<sup>34</sup> At the end of August 1943 the Reich audit office's accounts had recorded a total of 2,055 bunkers in 76 towns, of which 1,749 were structurally complete.<sup>35</sup>

After the first heavy raids on towns in the west of Germany Goebbels noted, on 10 April 1943: 'The building of bunkers and bombproof shelters is the most pressing problem. In some towns the population is exposed totally defenceless to the British air war. There is a lack of manpower and materials for building bunkers. The rest of the Reich will have to step in to help here.'<sup>36</sup> Compared to the extensive plans that had been presented when the priority programme was launched in October 1940, the picture presented by Goebbels as ILA chairman some two and a half years later was a gloomy one. The massive building plans had already been showing signs of falling through in the winter of 1941/2. On 28 January 1942 Milch suggested to Hitler that the building of bombproof bunkers should be held back for a while so as to then put the labour, materials, and transport that this freed up to use converting cellars into air-raid shelters.<sup>37</sup> Hitler showed himself in agreement with this, and further endorsed this decision on 19 February in order to 'shift prisoners of war and workers from the building sector into arms manufacture'.<sup>38</sup> Most of all, however, other large-scale projects drastically reduced the capacity available for the priority programme as the war continued. From 1942 the fortifying of the Atlantic Wall

<sup>33</sup> Weekly report on 29 Jan. 1942, BA R 23.01/5952.

<sup>34</sup> Weekly report on 7 May 1943, BA R 23.01/5952.

<sup>36</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, viii. 85 (10 Apr. 1943).

<sup>37</sup> Draft of Milch's briefing for Hitler, minute of 28 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RL 4/341.

<sup>38</sup> Note of meeting on 25 Feb. 1942, BA-MA RW 19/1716.

<sup>35</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 245.

and building of U-boat pens alone absorbed substantial resources from the construction industry and manpower administration.<sup>39</sup> Already in the spring of 1942 the priority programme became, where the supply of raw materials was concerned, a temporary measure. Right up to the end of the war the building of bunkers remained rather more of a makeshift; the intention of the Nazi leadership, proclaimed by the propaganda, of providing every *Volksgenosse* with a bombproof place of shelter showed itself to be no more than wishful thinking.

The labour-intensive bunker-building programme was impossible to carry out without making extensive use of foreign workers, conscripted labour, and prisoners of war. In October 1941, in Berlin alone, there were working on 196 bunker construction sites 2,188 Italians, 1,710 Germans, 200 Croats, 112 Czechs, 80 Belgians, 57 Danes, 48 Slovaks, 41 Dutchmen, 34 Frenchmen, 18 Poles, 5 Bulgarians, 2 Spaniards, 1 Romanian, 1 Ukrainian, and 25 convicts, plus 645 French prisoners of war. Occupied on building bunkers in the capital at year-end 1940 was a workforce of around 10,000, a figure that rose in February 1941 to 17,000 and by the middle of that year reached a peak at 22,700 workers.<sup>40</sup> A labour force about equal to that working in Berlin alone at the time was in the summer of 1941 demanded by the RMfBuM for stepping up the tank-manufacturing programme. U-boat production, too, was in need of something like 20,000 extra pairs of hands.<sup>41</sup> Between the late autumn of 1941 and early 1942 skilled building-trade workers from Italy had played a sizeable part in building the bunkers; the biggest problem for the priority programme came at the end of 1941 with the expiry of the work contracts for the Italian workforce, which had a six-month limit. With the departure of the Italians the workforce at the disposal of the priority programme in 1942 shrank considerably. Of the approximately 12,500 workers employed on building bunkers and converting cellars into shelters in the area of the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* (a town-planning corporation covering a sizeable part of the Ruhr mining region) in December 1941, only 7,100 were still available in June 1942.<sup>42</sup> Up to December 1941 work had begun on building 235 surface bunkers in this area, of which 127 were structurally complete, though only 15 had been signed off as fully ready for use.<sup>43</sup> In all, 600,000 tonnes of concrete had been poured and 40,000 tonnes of structural iron used; the special representative for the priority programme in the Ruhr, Essen chief architect Heller, told a meeting of building representatives that to achieve this result the manpower effort needed for constructing the West Wall (the 'Siegfried Line') had long since been exceeded.<sup>44</sup> In June 1942 Heller finally announced that in the area

<sup>39</sup> See also *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 241. On the Atlantic Wall *ibid.* 511–16.

<sup>40</sup> Tally of the workforce on 25 Oct. 1941, BA R 46.06/674. <sup>41</sup> Rössler, *The U-Boat*, i. 127.

<sup>42</sup> Record of meeting of plenipotentiaries for civil defence at the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* on 23 Dec. 1941, StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Box 4, Akte Errichtung von bombensicheren LS-Bunkern, ii.

<sup>43</sup> Record of meeting of plenipotentiaries for civil defence at the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* on 23 Dec. 1941, StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Box 8, Akte Bestimmungen über den Bau von LS-Bunkern. <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

he was responsible for, work on building bunkers would have to be either concentrated on finishing those that were structurally complete, and on selected sites, or abandoned altogether.<sup>45</sup>

The concrete bunker could give the public a certain measure of protection, but it could not withstand a direct hit by a heavy bomb. At a meeting of the war committee of mayors held in Munich in November 1943, the mayor of Mannheim Carl Renninger spoke on 'The City and the Air War'.<sup>46</sup> He related how his city had undergone four major 'terror raids', which had destroyed its western outskirts. He ascribed the (compared to other cities) low death toll of 1,000 to the fifty-two bombproof shelters, which were able to accommodate around 12,000 and had in his opinion proved their worth. A similar result had been achieved by the building offices of the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* in August 1943.<sup>47</sup> In places where there was an adequate number of bombproof tunnels and bunkers, losses among the civilian population were, it seemed, lower than in less well-protected parts of a town.

The inadequate number of bunkers and shelters for the public led, in the last months of the war, to vociferous criticism. In Hamburg-Harburg, users of the surface bunker there were as late as March 1945 protesting loudly that it was fitted out to take 1,200 and was now having to offer protection to as many as 5,000. On top of this people were furious about the snail's-pace building of additional shelter tunnels, about 'insolent' shelter wardens, filthy rooms in the bunkers, and a general overcrowding of the surface bunker by 'permanent visitors' who came to spend their nights in it.<sup>48</sup> The Wehrmacht propaganda office found the same in the Reich capital in March 1945: 'A very frequent topic of conversation now is that there are too few bunkers in Berlin. And severe and bitter criticism about this is levelled at the agencies concerned. It is said many times that the powers-that-be must have very little interest in the fate of the broad mass of people. There had, it is being said, been plenty of time to build bunkers, even in the latter years of the war. There had been enough labour, especially if more use had been made of prisoners of war.'<sup>49</sup> As early as the summer of 1943 Goebbels had noted: 'Most of all, the public is indignant that we are not able to give them enough bunkers. I am hoping, though, that converting some of the ruined buildings into solid bunkers will be able to do something to overcome this problem.'<sup>50</sup> Resorting to makeshifts was however no answer to the problem, which persisted right up to the end

<sup>45</sup> Record of meeting of plenipotentiaries for civil defence at the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* on 23 June 1941, StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Box 4, Akte Errichtung von bombensicheren LS-Bunkern, ii.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the 11th meeting of the war committee of the mayors of city group A on 12 Nov. 1943 in Munich, BA R 18/1275.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the advisory committee of the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk*, 18 Aug. 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, coll. Tiefbauamt/47.

<sup>48</sup> *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 393 (report from Hamburg, 15 Mar. 1945).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 311 (report from Berlin, 31 Mar. 1945).

<sup>50</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 37 (3 July 1943).

of the war. The population was particularly incensed when it thought it could detect preference being given in the provision of shelters. The building of bombproof bunkers for ministers, Reich leaders, Gauleiters, and other eminent personalities was from 1941 a cause of discontent in Berlin. Rumours circulated among the staff in the Reich ministries about the sumptuous fitting-out of bunkers for those belonging to the Nazi elite, and obliged Speer to offer justifications and issue statements on the subject.<sup>51</sup> There were later similar loud protests in Dresden when the Gauleiter there, Martin Mutschmann, had the city's only bombproof bunker built underneath his private villa, with the aid of the SS corps of engineers.<sup>52</sup> In Rostock there were also mutterings of discontent about the Party bigwigs there because of the preference they were said to be enjoying where bunker protection was concerned.<sup>53</sup>

In the summer of 1943 the Bochum chief of police complained to the local Kreis headquarters that when an air-raid warning was sounded a large number of NSDAP officials were occupying the public surface bunkers.<sup>54</sup> On the pretext of 'keeping order' inside the bunkers, Party members had 'made themselves comfortable with a few crates of beer', which had incensed the public seeking shelter there. The Nazi leadership was forced to take seriously the widespread rumours about preference being shown to leading figures and high officials in the Party. After 1943, requests from people like civil-service mandarins and members of the Reichstag to have private shelters built for them were as a rule turned down; and during the last two years of the war leading actors and artists concerned for their personal safety also usually met with a refusal when they expressed a wish to have a shelter provided at government expense.<sup>55</sup>

Hitler himself enjoyed a plentiful supply of reinforced concrete to have every conceivable form of personal protection built. More than a million cubic metres of it were expended on setting up the 'Wolf's Lair' command bunker with its 8-metre-thick reinforced concrete roof; the bunkers at the 'Riese' (Giant) Führer HQ south of Breslau; the underground installations in the Jonas valley near Ohrdruf in Thuringia; and not least the 'Führerbunker' that the Essen construction company Hochtief was from early 1943 excavating 12 metres below ground near the Reich chancellery. At around 28,000, the labour force that these kept busy was more numerous than that engaged on all civilian bunker-building over the years 1943 and 1944 taken together.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Speer to Reich finance minister Johann Ludwig Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, 26 Nov. 1941, BA R 46.06/660. <sup>52</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 99-102; Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 178.

<sup>53</sup> *Bomben auf Rostock*, 162-75.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from police chief Walther Oberhaidacher to Kreisleiter Ernst Riemenschneider, 9 Aug. 1943, StA Münster, NSDAP-Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen, No. 66.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from inspector-general of construction, 22 July 1944, BA R 120/2749. The musical conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and Hitler's personal physician Prof. Theodor Morell still had private bunkers built for them in 1944. That for Furtwängler was carried out on Hitler's orders, see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi. 407 (4 Mar. 1944).

<sup>56</sup> Speer, *Third Reich*, 539 n. 5.

Similarly extensive were the air-raid shelters for Hitler and the Nazi elite at the Obersalzberg around Berchtesgaden, where shortly before the end of the war a great deal of manpower and materials was expended on building a vast system of bunkers and tunnels.<sup>57</sup> While from the start of the war the general public was largely denied proper protection against air attack, the political, military, and social cream of society made sure of having comparatively handsome facilities. For most Germans, especially in small and medium-sized towns, going to a makeshift shelter in a cellar when the air-raid siren sounded was a feature of everyday life on the home front; in the majority of cases these so-called 'shelters' gave no effective protection against the massive bombing raids that began from 1943 on. Yet towards the end of the war even the deep tunnel shelters and surface bunkers regarded as being 'bomb-proof' did not offer absolute safety, as a number of direct hits on them were to show.<sup>58</sup>

Because of the high cost, in money and materials, of building surface bunkers, tunnel shelters were also constructed—making use of the population's labour, and with funding from the state; as an alternative, they offered a substantial saving in materials. The two largest shelters in the Reich for civilians were tunnel shelters. The Schloßberg one in Graz could hold about 50,000 persons. A tunnel system in construction since 1940, with nineteen entrances, stretched under the city centre of Dortmund at as much as 15 metres below ground, and could provide shelter for up to 20,000; in the final extended form planned it was to accommodate as many as 40,000.<sup>59</sup> The forerunners of this tunnel system had been constructed from 1937 for a planned underground railway. For the Ruhr area a comprehensive 'Ruhr self-help programme' was developed under this 'supplementary programme' or 'priority programme extension', applying to category II civil air defence localities (mostly chief towns of a district, with an average population of 50,000); this was launched, with the OT involved, in the autumn of 1943, and continued until the spring of 1945. In an edict to the Reich defence commissioners on 4 November 1943 Göring had expressly emphasized that 'the building of tunnel shelters is one of the most important measures for protection against the terror raids'.<sup>60</sup> Immediately after his tour of various cities in the west of Germany in the autumn of that year, he ordered that shelter tunnels should be laid out 'on a large scale' for protecting the public. The building of new surface bunkers, and further

<sup>57</sup> Chaussy and Püschner, *Nachbar Hitler*, 209 n. 22. Parts of the tunnel system are today incorporated into the permanent exhibition, on the Obersalzberg, by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Berlin and Munich).

<sup>58</sup> According to a report from the Luftwaffe's Reich civil air defence institute (17 Jan. 1945), there were up to the end of 1944 a total of 120 direct hits on air-raid bunkers of this kind, BA-MA RL 4/358.

<sup>59</sup> Blank, 'Die Stadt Dortmund', 20. A tunnel system under the Old Town quarter of Hamm planned in 1943 was to reach a depth of up to 25 m, see letter from city architect Emil Haarmann to the mayor of Hamm dated 18 Oct. 1943, StadtA Hamm, doc. 510.

<sup>60</sup> Priority letter from RLM and ObdL, 10 Jan. 1944 to RVKs re special importance of building tunnel shelters, StA Münster, Kreis Meschede/Landratsamt No. 2518.

work on structurally complete bunkers, could, he said, be discontinued.<sup>61</sup> In the spring of 1944 a few more small and medium-sized towns in western Germany under severe threat of air raids such as Neheim-Hüsten, Hattingen, Paderborn, Schwelm, Unna, Gütersloh, and Wesel were added to the priority programme list; this was meant to go at least halfway to improving civil defence measures that in these communities were scarcely existent.<sup>62</sup>

The extension of the building programme to category II and III localities as well could not however hide the fact that in the summer of 1943 the whole of the sheltering facilities in smaller towns, even those close to the relatively well-defended Ruhr area, fell short of the needs. The Kreis chief town of Iserlohn, for instance, had in July of that year only 19 more or less bombproof shelters, with room for just 1,560 out of some 38,400 inhabitants.<sup>63</sup> Things were no different in the neighbouring town of Lüdenscheid, where for a population of around 13,700 there were only 13 shelters, accommodating about 1,280. The Kreis chief town of Schwelm with a population of 23,500 and 16 shelters for a total of 3,150 persons, together with Soest (approx. 25,100 inhabitants and 4,000 places in 22 shelters that in fact included five bombproof bunkers) and Unna (20,000 inhabitants and again 22 shelters, holding 5,800) on the eastern edge of the Ruhr were exceptional.

When the Allied air raids became more intensive from autumn 1944, the additional measures taken thus far however proved inadequate; the construction of shelter tunnels had to be stepped up again. In early October, for instance, the NSDAP's Kreis HQ in Meschede wrote in a circular to local branches: 'In view of the enemy's ever-fiercer terror from the air it is absolutely essential that at least simple air-raid shelter facilities should be created in municipalities and localities that have so far not built any shelters.'<sup>64</sup> The Meschede district councillor countered these demands from the local Party leadership by saying: 'For the past two years we have been talking about starting work on constructing shelter tunnels and trenches', but that 'our plans have so far mostly come to nothing due to the shortage of labour',<sup>65</sup> and summed up in closing: 'Now that the front has come closer and there are daylight raids, especially those by fighter-bombers, it is essential that work be undertaken on air-raid protection. The Reich defence commissioner and Gauleiter had ordered that all foreigners, who do not work on Sundays, should be called on to do this work.'<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Priority letter from RLM and ObdL, 4 Dec. 1943, StA Münster, OP No. 5055.

<sup>62</sup> Führer's priority programme—extension to civil air defence localities without civil defence police, in accordance with RLM and ObdL decree of 25 Mar. 1944, StA Münster, Kreis Meschede/Landratsamt No. 2612.

<sup>63</sup> Regierungspräsident of Arnsberg to the BdO in Münster, 20 July 1944 *re* air-raid shelters in the Arnsberg district, HStA Düsseldorf, RW 37-22.

<sup>64</sup> Kreis HQ Meschede, 6 Oct. 1944 to local groups, the district councillor, and the regional labour office *re* building of shelter tunnels, StA Münster, Kreis Meschede/Landratsamt No. 2528.

<sup>65</sup> Circular from Meschede Landrat, 10 Oct. 1944, to district administrators in the Kreis *re* building of shelter tunnels, StA Münster, Kreis Meschede/Landratsamt No. 2518. <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



In Gau Westfalen-Süd in the final phase of the war the Gau HQ absorbed into itself all the organizations dealing with civil defence construction. A Gau civil air defence staff, with subsidiary staffs in the Kreise, issued orders (including technical specifications) on the building of shelter tunnels; this was intended also, Gauleiter Hoffmann said, to stiffen the *Volkgemeinschaft's* will to battle on, and to boost the 'spirit of self-help'. The Ruhr was however not the only industrial region in which the Party's Gauleiters initiated a shelter-tunnel-building programme in order to overcome the shortcomings that existed, and in so doing to extend their influence into fields of activity that had so far been civil-service territory. Goebbels's plans for the Reich capital have already been mentioned; but in south-western Germany, too, tunnels were seen as a quick way of creating shelters. In April 1944 the Baden Gauleiter and defence commissioner, Robert Wagner, had seized control of the development of civil defence measures in his region, which included Alsace.<sup>67</sup> The Kreisleiters were, Wagner ordered, to 'encourage' the inhabitants of the towns to construct simple slit-trench shelters. Although places like Pforzheim and Freiburg had worked intensively since the spring of 1944 on providing shelters, what was achieved fell far short of what was hoped for; both materials and labour were lacking. In Freiburg there were shelter facilities for only a small part of its population of around 110,000.<sup>68</sup> In expert circles and among the public who had had experience of air raids, opinion on the efficacy of the tunnel shelters built on simplified lines was unanimous—they were a 'make-do'. In the spring of 1945, the safest protection against bombing was occupation by Allied troops as soon as possible.

(b) *Bunkers and Town Planners*

In the priority programme the technical guidelines were clearly set out in building directives, but not the arrangement and design of the bunker. These were to fit in architecturally with the surrounding residential premises in line with the ideas of the planners, and at the same time reflect the 'sturdy resistance of the German people'. The building plans were as a rule based on the stylistic elements of National Socialist architecture. Sometimes, as still in 1939 in Lübeck and Hamburg, they also had the look of a medieval fortress, though this was far from matching the ideological notions. When the programme began in the spring of 1941 the surface bunkers were often given a saddle roof; the external walls of these 'air-raid shelter buildings' were initially dressed with reddish-brown vitrified brick and sculptural ornamentation, and had portal-like entrances in sandstone. When the priority programme was announced in October 1940, the GB-Bau described the ideological message of the monumental concrete blocks in the following words: 'In times past, fortresses and castles in many cases served not only a purely material, defensive purpose, but also inspired their designer to find a form that while suited to military need has in many cases gone far beyond that to remain a cultural monument to an era.'<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 161–2.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted from Hammann, 'Der LS-Bunker', 77.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*



From the outset the Nazis attached to the bunkers in German cities an additional historical mission, making a statement to later ages as symbols of and monuments to the home front.<sup>70</sup> The town-planning aspects of building bunkers can be well demonstrated by taking the example of the Ruhr, which as a centre of such construction occupied a prime position in the programme. Hans Hammann, on the staff of the 'special representative for the Führer's priority programme in the area of the Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk', in the spring of 1942 announced that the surface bunkers would 'as monuments for the generations to come be typical of our time'. Looking into the future of the 'Thousand-Year Reich' trumpeted by the propaganda, he added that where the building cost was concerned the bunkers would be 'million-mark edifices' 'that will last for centuries, and through which posterity will know whether we have succeeded in mastering this unique task aright'.<sup>71</sup> This was the basis for the Reich-wide 'Alarm' architectural competition that opened at the turn of the year 1940/1 and was meant to elicit types and designs for 'modern shelter buildings fitted to their purpose'. The growing shortage of materials in 1941 however prevented most bunkers from being decorated with architectural features in line with Nazi iconography.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless the surface bunkers, with their frequent hints of castles and severely classical design, tied in with the monumental Third Reich building style represented by Hitler's 'personal architects' Albert Speer and Hermann Giesler.<sup>73</sup> Right from the beginning of the priority programme the 'artistic development', and how to incorporate the bunker buildings into the then still current development plans for the cities, were discussed and centrally coordinated.<sup>74</sup>

With the building departments in the cities, the office of the special representative for the Ruhr mining region formed the link with GB-Bau. Since in 1941 most cities still presented an intact appearance, the choice of sites and the integrating of surface bunkers architecturally with the town-planning were guided by the existing development plans. For the 'Gau capitals' (such as Düsseldorf, Bochum, Essen, Kassel, Cologne, Munich, Münster, Hamburg, and Hanover) there were special plans geared to the ideal image of National Socialist 'show cities'. After the expected victorious end to the war these were to become centres displaying the Nazi exercise of power.<sup>75</sup> The general development plans for other major cities had at the start of the war already

<sup>70</sup> On the bunkers' function as monuments see, for example, *Erinnerungsorte aus Beton*.

<sup>71</sup> Hamman, 'Der LS-Bunker', 77, 80.

<sup>72</sup> Already in a decree issued on 20 June 1941 the ObdL was laying down that in future the interior of these shelters should be fitted out in a simple and temporary fashion, and that the treatment of the exterior should be economical with materials, StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Box 5, ii. 2 (Luftschutz).

<sup>73</sup> See Durth, *Deutsche Architekten; Bauen im Nationalsozialismus*; Reichhardt and Schäche, *Von Berlin nach Germania*.

<sup>74</sup> Special representative GB-Bau to city representatives, 15 Jan. 1941 re artistic design of air-raid shelter buildings in the priority programme, StadtA Herne, Box 5, Akte Durchführung der Verfügung wegen Errichtung von bombensicheren LS-Häusern. <sup>75</sup> See Petsch, 'Architektur'.

largely finished dealing with future expansion. For them, fitting the bunkers into the planners' existing design posed a much bigger problem, because as a rule the shelters had to be erected at major traffic intersections and in densely populated parts of town; but in these locations there were now hardly any suitable sites available. A number of surface bunkers were consequently built on the sites of earlier synagogues, as in Wetzlar, Braunschweig, Solingen, Frankfurt-am-Main, Berlin, Siegen, Cologne, Emden, and Hamburg.<sup>76</sup> After their pillaging and destruction in November 1938 most of the synagogues had already been pulled down, so the city authorities made the confiscated ground available to the Reich as sites for erecting bunkers. These surface bunkers are today memorials, reminding us not only of the bombing war and the forced labourers who built them, but in many instances also the history of the Jewish communities (one that the Nazis had, in the fullest sense of the word, sought to bury beneath the concrete). The bunkers have thus fulfilled the monumental function that the Third Reich's architects and town planners had planned for them, but not in the way Nazi ideology and architecture had in mind. Decades after the end of the war the bunkers are today not only sombre reminders of everyday life on the home front under the bombing, but also historical relics of Nazism's criminal policies.

The symbolic concept of 'standing firm against all comers' even led in some places to plans to turn whole towns into 'fortress towns'. An early example of planning this kind of development, in which the design of the surface bunkers played an important part, is Hamm, on the eastern edge of the Ruhr.<sup>77</sup> As the site of the largest marshalling yards in Europe, and the home of a number of important industrial concerns, Hamm with in 1939 about 56,000 inhabitants was declared a category I civil defence location, and included in the priority programme in October 1940. For the Allied air forces, Hamm was synonymous with German rail traffic. Together with Berlin and the Leuna works near Nerseburg, it was one of the main targets for the 8th USAAF in the European theatre of operations. When the plans for the priority programme were put under way at the turn of the year 1940/1, surely no one in Hamm, an administrative centre of Westphalia, ever imagined that by the time the war ended it would lie in almost total ruins.

While the first bunkers erected in Hamm during the first wave of building were of the usual, standard type, the plans for the second wave in the spring of 1941 incorporated the surface bunkers into an overall town-planning concept. The city architect, Emil Haarmann, sketched out the image of a city whose limits, along the ring of walls of its medieval heart, would be girdled by nine tower-shaped bunkers. Hamm sought in this way to link up with its medieval 'defensive stronghold' history as the residence of the counts of Mark, later the dukes of Kleve-Mark, and with its role as a principal city of the Hanseatic

<sup>76</sup> For an example, see Bartetzko, 'Gebaut für die Ewigkeit'.

<sup>77</sup> On town-planning in Hamm under the Third Reich see *Hamm: Planen und Bauen*.

League. In June 1941 Haarmann's design for the tower bunkers, and his concept of a 'bunkered town', won the approval of the area representative of the *Ruhrkohlenbezirk* (the Ruhr mining region authority), so that building could start in the summer of that year.<sup>78</sup> By the end of 1942 six of the towers had already been completed, but the remaining plans had, 'for reasons dictated by the war', to be shelved until after Germany's expected final victory.<sup>79</sup>

Preparing for a projected third wave of building under the priority programme, Haarmann drew up in the summer of 1943 designs for two further tower-like 'Old Town bunkers', with reinforced roofs and walls; work on building these began in the same year, but had still not been completed at the end of the war since Hamm—like other places—lacked the necessary building materials and labour. Finally in October 1943 the architect had to come to terms with the failure of his plans for development, based on an idealized image of the Middle Ages. In view of the adverse situation militarily and in domestic politics, Haarmann came to the sober conclusion that in Hamm 'at the present time' only part of the population could be accommodated in bombproof shelter facilities.<sup>80</sup> According to Haarmann, even if twice the nominal numbers were occupying each of the available surface bunkers, and taking into account the two 'Old Town bunkers' still under construction, they could take only 24 per cent—that is to say 11,000—of the city's (German) inhabitants. Compared to other towns with a similar population, this was an outstanding achievement, yet hardly enough to meet the architect's ambitions.

In the autumn of 1943 Haarmann's concept of a 'defensive bunker town' had to give way to the reality of the air war. As an alternative, the Hamm municipal architect made plans for an all-out effort building shelter tunnels and shelters in cellars, together with an extensive tunnel system beneath the Old Town and its outskirts. Construction was to be guided by experience gained in Dortmund, but the tunnel floor level was to be at up to 25 metres below ground; there, well over 25,000 persons should, already in the first phase of the work, be able to enjoy full protection from the bombing by the spring of 1944. Hamm's building supremo could, admittedly, see no advantage financially or from the construction-technology viewpoint over surface bunkers, but in his opinion at that time tunnelling under the centre of the town was the most future-proof solution as it allowed account to be taken of 'the emerging future development of bombing technology'.<sup>81</sup> The destruction of Hamm by numerous heavy air raids in the following year then submerged large swaths of the town in smoking ash and rubble. Work on building the tunnels was discontinued, so that not only the medieval theme in bunker-building but further plans for civil defence protection in Hamm, too, had finally come to naught.

<sup>78</sup> Record of meeting between Haarmann and Dr Schreyer deputizing for area representative Heller on 13 June 1941, StadtA Hamm, doc. 511.

<sup>79</sup> StadtA Hamm, doc. 511; see also *Hamm: Planen und Bauen*.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Haarmann to the mayor of Hamm, 18 Oct. 1943, StadtA Hamm, doc. 510.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

In the planning for reconstruction of the town that started in the summer of 1944 the idea of a 'bunker town' no longer played any role.

Another example of a planned bunker town is Hanover. In October 1943 this 'Gau capital' of Lower Saxony suffered a great deal of destruction in a series of massive daylight and night raids. The architect in charge of Hanover's planning, Gerhard Graubners, had in December 1943 proposed that the city centre should be 'bunkered' as part of the reconstruction.<sup>82</sup> In contrast to the plans for Hamm, those of Graubners were not based on a visionary reconstruction giving the appearance of a fortress town from the Middle Ages, but brought into his thinking the modern traffic- and town-planning concepts found in reconstruction plans drawn up the 'Speer working group'. Ideologically, he leaned entirely towards a historicizing theme of the medieval town, designed with the idealized aspect of a 'place of refuge', in this connection also putting its 'stout defence' character on show.<sup>83</sup> Starting from the plans for a 'modern townscape', Graubners looked on the building and town-planning integration of air-raid bunkers as something more pragmatic and purpose-oriented than artistic and historical. Moreover, the road system in central Hanover was to be underground, and the town's residential, commercial, and industrial areas were to be fitted into a complex bunker system as part of an overall concept. Already by early 1944 Graubners's ideas for a 'bunkered town' had shown themselves to be unrealistic, and the plans were finally abandoned—especially as the architect had, because of the severe bomb damage, opened a discussion on rebuilding Hanover somewhere else, thereby adding fresh fuel to the fire of local politics.<sup>84</sup>

### (c) *Survival in Cellars, Tunnels, and Bunkers*

During air raids the overwhelming majority of the population, even in the larger cities, could rely for shelter only on the cellars in apartment blocks, and the 'communal shelters' in public buildings; many of these had already been constructed before or at the start of the war, though very often they had been enlarged, as a stopgap measure to meet the need, only in 1941 by foreign workers, Wehrmacht auxiliary units, and prisoner-of-war work squads. Since September 1939 those living in apartments had adapted their habits to the air war: 'In all the rooms there are sacks full of sand. Buckets of water for putting out fires have been placed throughout the building. Every container in the laundry room is filled with a standby supply of water.'<sup>85</sup> By 1942/3, especially, the public were well aware that the makeshift conversion of house

<sup>82</sup> Durth and Gutschow, *Träume*, ii. 719–22, 771–6.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 772.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 720–1.

<sup>85</sup> Römer diary (15 June 1943), StadtA Hagen. Richard Römer, born in 1903, was a member of the NSDAP from 1937 and DAF works representative at the Stadtwerken in Hagen, where he deputized during the war years for an engineer called up for military service. He started his diary in June 1943 'influenced by the recent heavy raids on neighbouring towns and the dams', in order to 'conscientiously record for my family' what he lived through.

cellars offered no really effective protection in a raid. 'We sit there almost every night in the cellar, exposed to it all without protection. I have, it's true, strengthened the ceilings well so that they'll hold up under a pile of rubble, but our thin ceilings are no good against even medium-sized bombs. It's a horrible feeling when the engines are droning above our heads and we can constantly hear the whistle of the bombs coming down.'<sup>86</sup>

Individual cellars were linked with those of the surrounding houses by breakthroughs pierced in the walls, to make it possible to pass from one into the next in an emergency; a system of passageways and tunnels thus came into being beneath the houses and streets. Yet when a whole street of houses or an entire city block was ablaze, and buildings were collapsing onto the cellar (a frequent occurrence during large-scale raids), the opportunities for escape for people sheltering in cellars were very limited. As the bombing intensified, fear and terror spread among the 'shelter communities' down in the cellars, since it had very quickly become common knowledge that when houses and whole areas were on fire these could become a death-trap if the occupants did not immediately get out, away from the massive heat and the smoke and fumes. Experience in the cellar shelters during air raids is described in the following diary entry:

First, a series of incendiary bombs came rattling down close by. Then came the heavy, heavy hammer-blows, one after the other. As we don't have a deep cellar, we crouched down on mats on the floor, close to the breakthrough. Everyone with a wet cloth covering the head, and the gasmask on one arm. Matches in one's pocket, and a damp handkerchief that on the call 'Look out!'—when there was the sound of heavy bombs coming down—we pressed against our faces so that nose and ears were held shut by the thumbs and little fingers and the eyes and mouth (also closed) were protected against air pressure and brick dust. Although no HE bombs or air-mines fell in our street, the walls would shudder worryingly from time to time. The lights went out, and we lit our lanterns. There was the crashing of broken glass and falling roof-tiles, window-frames, and the like. We expected to find debris in our flat yet again. The smell of burning was everywhere.<sup>87</sup>

The situation with regard to air-raid protection in buildings can be documented by taking the example of Essen, which after Berlin was the most frequently bombed major city in the whole European theatre of operations. With at that time about 670,500 inhabitants the city had in March 1943 a total of 12,000 cellar shelters, accommodating 201,600 persons (30 per cent of the population), 184 large shelters for 43,200, and 36 'bombproof' surface bunkers and large tunnels made available for temporary use that could provide protection for no fewer than 18,670.<sup>88</sup> At first sight these statistics give

<sup>86</sup> Römer diary (15 June 1943), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>87</sup> 'Kriegschronik der Stadt Dortmund', 23 May 1944 (Dr Luise von Winterfeld), StadtA Dortmund, coll. 424-47.

<sup>88</sup> Schedule of state reached in expansion of civil defence measures, March 1943, StadtA Essen, Repertorium 2, § I, No. 1126d.

the impression of a population quite well protected from air raids. Yet comprehensive protection was guaranteed only by deep shelter tunnels and massive surface bunkers, and compared to the number of the other 'debris- and splinter-proof' shelters there were only a few of these. In newspaper articles it was still being suggested to the population in the autumn of 1942 that such bunkers were being built in large numbers: 'Before the eyes of the people in towns and cities, more and more new surface bunkers are rising towards the sky, looking like defiant fortresses. They are gigantic structures, in top-grade reinforced concrete, enormous bunkers that in various districts tower above the rows of houses, the most up-to-date shelters against air attack that, with their gigantic proportions, ensure protection and refuge to a whole section of the city when the air-raid sirens sound . . . anyone sitting inside one of these need have no fear for his life!'<sup>89</sup>

The use of public bunkers and surface bunkers was subject to strict rules, to which in the final years of the war, because of the increasing raids and the overcrowding of people seeking shelter, hardly any heed was paid. The first, interim guidance on the use of 'giant surface shelters' was given by the RLM in May 1941, at a time when most of the surface bunkers had not even been completed.<sup>90</sup> Under these guidelines, the local civil defence leader was, in 'agreement' with the NSDAP (local branches and Kreis HQs), to determine the range of persons entitled to use the bunker. First in line would be the inhabitants of buildings whose apartment blocks had no or only inadequate shelters (in 1941 age and sex were not yet taken into consideration). 'Marshals' and a 'bunker warden' were to be appointed for every bunker.<sup>91</sup> A 'look-out group' was to keep control of the bunker during air-raid warnings, and to fight any fires that started close to the bunker. At the same time the RLM laid down that bunkers under construction should, where this had reached a sufficient stage, be made available for temporary occupation. In the spring of 1942 the increasing pace of the RAF night raids made it seem absolutely essential—especially in towns in western Germany that formed the main targets at that time—to release for use the surface bunkers most of which were then still under construction. The BdO in Münster, for instance, announced in March 1942 that 'structurally complete' bunkers were with immediate effect to be opened to the public on a provisional basis.<sup>92</sup> Express instructions were however to be given for users to take with them protective equipment such as

<sup>89</sup> 'Eisenbeton gegen Britenbomben – Luftschutzbunker für die Herner Bevölkerung' [Reinforced concrete against British bombs—air-raid bunkers for the people of Herne], in *Herner Zeitung*, 20 Nov. 1942, StadtA Herne.

<sup>90</sup> RLM/ObdL civil defence inspectorate, 31 May 1941 *re* bombproof shelter buildings for the public, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 103 02796 to 103 02800.

<sup>91</sup> As the war progressed, women were increasingly used as bunker wardens and marshals. In Berlin in April 1944 there were some 308 women operating as 'bunker mothers', see Paul, *Der Heimatkrieg*, 332.

<sup>92</sup> Circular by BdO to senior administrators in Münster, 19 Mar. 1942, *re* provisional release of structurally complete civil defence bunkers, StA Münster, OP No. 5055.



public-issue gasmasks, and especially pocket torches (since there was as a rule still no electric lighting). In most surface bunkers it had been impossible to install doors and internal fittings, as well as ventilation and filtering, because of supply bottlenecks, so that the hastily arranged opening of bunkers that were not even half-finished betrayed itself as a measure whose stopgap character emphasized the failure of the civilian bunker-building programme.

In view of the heavy air attacks and the increased use being made of bunkers the police authorities felt the need for a firm set of regulations, in order to direct the increasing flow of people seeking shelter and at the same time keep out 'undesirable elements'. Bunker wardens and marshals were instructed to man the entrances when an air-raid warning sounded, to keep a check on who could and could not enter their bunker. 'Eastern workers', Jews, and 'gypsies' were forbidden to make use of bunkers and other public shelters.<sup>93</sup> Protection for those affected by this exclusion was a matter for their employers or the persons themselves. In the case of 'western workers' it was left to the judgement of the bunker warden whether to admit them when they were 'in danger of life and limb'. The range of persons who could be allowed to enter the bunker on the personal say-so of the bunker warden included members of the Wehrmacht and nationals of friendly countries. In order to prevent overcrowding the bunkers it was already in the summer of 1943, in western Germany at least, generally forbidden for men between the ages of 16 and 60, 'capable of work and of bearing arms'—and in particular those in Wehrmacht uniform—to take shelter in a bunker during an air-raid warning unless there was immediate danger.<sup>94</sup> In the final years of the war having a secure place in a shelter became a privilege. In 1944 the Berlin public, in letters to their Gauleiter Goebbels, asked that women not in employment and their children be refused entry to bunkers, which would then make more space there. Goebbels basically shared this view, and had a bunker regulation drafted 'under which bunker places should in the main be kept free for the working population'.<sup>95</sup>

A procedure similar to the laying down of entitlements to use public surface bunkers was also followed for private bunkers and 'self-protection' shelter tunnels. In contrast to the surface bunkers and large tunnel complexes, the Party had a marked influence here. In April 1944 the Gauleiter and RVK of Southern Westphalia issued an ordinance on claims to the use of private shelter tunnels that had been built under the 'Ruhr self-protection programme'. In this he stated expressly that the 'tunnel users' community' was free to choose

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, the guidelines from the chief of police in Bochum on the use of bunkers in his area, 14 July 1943, StA Münster, NSDAP-Kreis- und Ortsgruppenleitungen No. 66. Jews had already been excluded from civil defence provisions before the war, see Lemke, *Luftschutz*, 378–80.

<sup>94</sup> Guidelines from the Bochum chief of police for the use of bunkers, 14 July 1943, StA Münster, NSDAP-Kreis- u. Ortsgruppenleitungen No. 66. The basis for the prohibition was an ObdL edict of 22 June 1943 banning the use of bunkers by males seeking shelter in 'civil defence localities in the west of the homeland war area'. There were exceptions only for ill and infirm men and the severely war-wounded.

<sup>95</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi. 243 (5 Feb. 1944).



who the circle of regular users should be. *Volksgenossen* who had not been involved in the building of the tunnels would 'undermine the notions of the tunnel community and of self-help in the population'; they should, the 'tunnels order' decreed, on principle be refused entry if there was no 'danger to life and limb'.<sup>96</sup>

The bunker and tunnel wardens, responsible for the running of the shelters, were recruited mostly from the ranks of the Party divisions, the RLB, or Orpo pensioners. Individually employed electricians and mechanics were to have charge of the operation and maintenance of the technical equipment; later on, the war-wounded were also used for tending to the bunkers. The civil defence wardens wielded, in their fiefdom, wide authority to give orders, which did not endear them to the public. In Hamburg, for example, those seeking shelter complained not only that 'the wardens in the bunkers behave with extreme impertinence and arrogance', but that 'one is threatened at once with the police for the slightest thing'. The unanimous verdict of shelterers in one Hamburg bunker was that 'the air-raid wardens do not calm people down, but make them more nervous'.<sup>97</sup> Up to 1942 the use made of the bunkers followed an apparently well-regulated pattern: Party, RLB, and civil defence police had made plans for the various districts of towns and the catchment areas of surface bunkers. The bunkers had double-bedded cabins on several floors in which families and those occupying a house were accommodated. Special rooms were provided for mothers, with aids to looking after nursing infants.

Entry was initially regulated by means of 'bunker cards', and users at first had individually allocated seating and sleeping places. In 1942 the use being made of the bunkers remained within manageable limits, such that for instance supplying ventilation with fresh air presented no problems. As the Allied air raids increased after the spring of 1943, however, life in a bunker became more and more of a torture. Even regulations and appeals for maintaining hygiene and cleanliness could do nothing to prevent vermin and infectious diseases. The report from a civil defence doctor in western Germany paints a striking picture:

Only a few days in a bunker makes people dull, callous, and indifferent to others. After an initial hyperexcitement they become grumpy and taciturn. They misappropriate objects that do not belong to them, show no respect for women and children; all sense of order and neatness disappears. They do not wash or comb their hair for days on end, having before been very spruce. Men do not shave, they neglect their clothing, they come to consult me dirty and smelly. In the bunkers they no longer look for a toilet, but relieve themselves in dark corners. Women neglect their children, men fight their way past women trying to get into the shelter . . . around 70 per cent of long-term bunker inmates suffer from 'bunker disease' (scabies)—and there is no water, poor means of heating, and nowhere any facilities for delousing. I'm overwhelmed with horror when I see how

<sup>96</sup> Order by Gauleiter Westfalen-Süd, 6 Apr. 1944 *re* claims on the use of private shelter tunnels, StA Münster, Kreis Meschede/Landratsamt No. 2518.

<sup>97</sup> *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 393 (15 Mar. 1945).

often children with scarlet fever and diphtheria are time and again discovered in rooms in the bunkers, wrapped up in blankets and sheets. One hopes that this time we shall be spared an outbreak of typhus . . . I can name you bunker doctors who watch with horror the slow coarsening and brutalizing of otherwise decent people, who suddenly after all that they own in the world has been lost or destroyed have turned into troglodytes, and to save their skins have taken to staying in the bunkers day and night.<sup>98</sup>

In many cities the raids and air-raid warnings recurred at such short intervals that those who had been bombed out, and the inhabitants of a district, moved into a bunker with their 'air-raid shelter suitcases' so as not to have to return to their own cellar shelter long since recognized as being dangerous. In June 1943 the chief of police in Oberhausen recorded, as the local civil defence leader for the city of Mülheim, that he had observed 'a general exodus from the houses and a rush into the bunkers and tunnels'. This had resulted in an eight- to tenfold overcrowding of the public shelters,<sup>99</sup> such that—and this probably reflected the situation in many towns and cities—it soon had to be recognized that 'the bunker cards we used to have don't mean a thing any more'.<sup>100</sup>

People were cramped for space in the bunkers, especially in those near the larger railway stations which were very heavily used. In Krefeld a 22-year-old Luftwaffe woman auxiliary in transit in November 1944 had to spend a night in a surface bunker, and her comments provide a snapshot of what life in the bunker at the time was like.

At the front of the room men and women of all ages were knocking back schnapps, since there had been a special issue. Thick clouds of tobacco smoke made sleep impossible. From one corner there came a jumble of noise of women shrieking and men mumbling drunkenly . . . children and old people lay asleep among the adults, wrapped in woollen blankets and tattered rags, on wooden plank beds or in chairs. Everywhere there were slumped, exhausted bodies and haggard faces . . . a terrible fug of the smell of dirty underclothes, sweat, and stale air almost took your breath away. A long way away a child was quietly weeping, while from the other side there came the sound of snoring and groaning.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from a fear of dying and nervous tension from hearing the bombs dropping, for people on the home front the salient features of the time they spent every day in the bunkers and tunnels, especially in the big cities from 1943 onwards, were the living conditions that prevailed in them, and uncertainty as to whether one's home would still be there when the raid was over

<sup>98</sup> Extract from a report from the head of the civil defence health service in Hamm, dated 21 Jan. 1945, to the medical council of Southern Westphalia and the Unna public health office, private archive of Michael Foedrowitz, Berlin.

<sup>99</sup> Report by the Oberhausen chief of police (also responsible for Mülheim/Ruhr) on the air raid on 27 April, 15 June, and 23 June 1943, 35, StadtA Oberhausen, coll. 10/121.

<sup>100</sup> Record of a meeting on 16 July 1943 *re* bunkers and shelter tunnels, StadtA Oberhausen, coll. Tiefbauamt/47.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted from Bronnen, 'Geschichte vom Überleben', 183–4 (diary entry by Rita H., b. 1922, of 22 Jan. 1945).

and whether one's household belongings would have survived. The effect of the high-explosive and incendiary bombs could be clearly felt through the bunker's metre-thick walls. One Red Cross nurse noted in March 1943: 'There's a panicky atmosphere in the bunker. Screaming women, screaming children, and wounded men were let in at the last moment, and then the thick iron doors shut tight. The bunker shakes. Sometimes a lot, sometimes a little. The blast from the landmines comes through the iron doors and makes your ears pop. There are violent vibrations, things are raining down from the sky, you can't think, you want to scream to make it go away.'<sup>102</sup> As soon as the bombs left the aircraft, according to contemporary witness, they made a noise that penetrated through walls and roofs and made a lasting impression, as a 26-year-old woman related of her experiences in February 1945: 'He [her husband] had strengthened the cellar door with iron bars and filled in the window with bricks. And yet we always felt the terrible air pressure from the explosions, and could always hear when the bombers let their carpet of bombs go above us.'<sup>103</sup>

One comment from Koblenz demonstrates the extent to which the public's everyday life in 1944/5 was governed by the air war: 'There are many people, mostly women, who sit in the cellars and bunkers the whole time! The housework at home doesn't get done! Nothing gets cooked! . . . Many of them hang around in the entrances to the bunkers even when there's been no air-raid warning! Many of them sleep in the bunker every night! The whole life of the household is dictated by this!'<sup>104</sup> Towards the end of the war the propaganda measures taken by the Party to influence mood and attitude in the bunkers (such as playing light music, and relaying information and reports of what was happening in the air) could do nothing to dispel the inevitable effects on 'fighting morale'.<sup>105</sup>

(d) *Air-Raid Warnings, Air Situation Reports, and Cable Broadcasting*

Taking shelter in time depended on the trouble-free operation of the Luftwaffe's aircraft reporting service and the local air-raid warning system. The first problems with the warning system that had been built in the pre-war years and later expanded already became apparent at the start of the air war in the summer of 1941.<sup>106</sup> The public were very indignant that the first RAF raids in

<sup>102</sup> Quoted from Foedrowitz, 'So verließ ich den Ort des Grauens', 167. There is a similar account by a man in Hagen in a heavily fortified bunker: 'The bunker rocks to and fro. It's been going on for more than an hour already. Then there's a new sound from outside, like a hailstorm. Incendiaries are pelting down, too,' Römer diary (22 Feb. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>103</sup> Hintz, *Schwerte*, 70 (report by Johanna Weber).

<sup>104</sup> Bellinghausen, *Hans Bellinghausen*, 183 (4 Nov. 1944).

<sup>105</sup> File note of the Gau propaganda office for Westfalen-Süd: cable broadcasting of music (Dec. 1943), StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Süd No. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the Reich defence committee of military district VI on 22 May 1940 in Münster, StA Münster, OP No. 5175, 13. The absence of any warning before the bombs started dropping was the subject of fierce criticism.

the summer of 1941 frequently came without any prior warning.<sup>107</sup> At the end of May 1940 the Reich defence committee for military district VI (Münster) noted 'that for years, when there was not yet a war, the public [had] become used to the idea of going down to the cellar when there was an air raid. Now that there really is a war and the bombs are falling, there is no warning being given and the population are supposed to remain where they are.'<sup>108</sup>

The numerous air-raid warnings affected economic life so much that there were drops in production and the workers were affected through, for instance, having their sleep disturbed.<sup>109</sup> The air-raid warnings posed a problem for the steel works in particular, as the furnaces had to be doused and then fired up again, which could bring about a substantial loss of output. In the first week of December 1940 the loss of production caused by the warnings in Dortmund alone amounted at the Hoesch-Stahlwerken to 1,480 t of crude iron and 1,926 t of steel pig, and that at the Dortmund-Hoerder Hüttenverein (a major supplier to the tank factories) to 705 t and 2,356 t respectively.<sup>110</sup> From 1942 on, the previous air-raid warning system had repeatedly to be updated to cope with new developments in the air war.<sup>111</sup> August 1942 saw the introduction of a new air-raid warning signal, the 'public warning', which it was hoped would both cut down the amount of time people spent in the shelters and shorten the interruptions to production in the factories.<sup>112</sup> By 1943/4, however, further steps had become necessary for matching the air-raid warnings to the situation.

In almost all parts of the Reich the number of warnings sounded rose substantially from the autumn of 1944, and with it the strain placed on the population. In 1943 Münster, for example, had a total of 75 warnings during daylight and 134 at night; in 1944 there were already 329 warnings, including 231 in daytime.<sup>113</sup> Between January and March 1945 there were 177 daylight raids and 58 warnings at night; in these three months the people of Münster spent, at 293 hours, more time in the bunkers and tunnels than they had over the whole of 1943.<sup>114</sup> In Offenbach near Frankfurt-am-Main, the number of night-time and daylight warnings rose over the same period from 74 to 255 in the following year and 114 in the last three months of the war.<sup>115</sup> Dresden had 30 'enemy aircraft approaching' warnings in 1943, a year later the warnings sounded 57 times, and in 1945 up to April the sirens were heard 64 times.<sup>116</sup> The number

<sup>107</sup> See also Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 102–3.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of a meeting on 22 May 1940, StA Münster, OP No. 5175.

<sup>109</sup> On this see, for example, Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 156–8.

<sup>110</sup> War diaries of the Dortmund armaments command, BA-MA RW 21-14/4-7. Current production of crankcases for the type IV tank at the Dortmund-Hoerder Hüttenverein was disrupted until March 1941.

<sup>111</sup> See for example *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5981–3 (reports on tests on the air-raid warning system). There is a good description of the warning system at local level in Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 100–8.

<sup>112</sup> Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*, 308.

<sup>113</sup> All the figures given here related solely to an 'enemy aircraft approaching' warning, excluding the 'general public warning' and 'imminent danger warning'.

<sup>114</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 107.

<sup>115</sup> Lux, *Luftangriffe auf Offenbach*, 139.

<sup>116</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 404–10.

of warnings heard in the industrial region of the Rhineland and Westphalia was particularly high. Between 2 September 1939 and 31 December 1943 the civil defence headquarters in Essen recorded 635 'enemy aircraft approaching' warnings, over 200 of these in 1943 alone.<sup>117</sup> There were a further 198 in Essen up to 31 October 1944.

In response to the incursions by Allied aircraft that were by the autumn of 1944 happening every day and night, the air-raid warning service instituted the 'pre-all-clear' and 'imminent danger' signals.<sup>118</sup> When the sirens sounded, the population were no longer to take shelter at once, as had been laid down before, but only on hearing the 'imminent danger' signal. The 'pre-all-clear', on the other hand, was to permit people to leave the bunkers before the actual all-clear was sounded, which allowed the public or 'self-protection' personnel to fight any small fires that had been started. A works foreman in the Ruhr commented rather resignedly in October 1944 that 'as enemy planes are about all the time now, there's a new warning system. Nowadays the sirens are going the whole day long—I counted 23 of them in one day. I don't listen to them any more; I take cover only when things are getting hot.'<sup>119</sup> In the end the warning system with its variety of signals—later there was yet another sound, to warn of an airborne landing—had by the final stage of the war become confusing, and explanations and instructions on what to do had repeatedly to be given in the press and over cable radio.

The fear of the serious consequences an air raid could have led to a special kind of anxiety, described as 'bunker panic'. Air warnings being sounded late or not at all, and the dropping of single bombs, often led to scenes of panic, with dense crowds around the entrances to and inside bunkers and shelter tunnels. In the closing months of the war, especially, reactions like this reached extreme proportions. It happened a number of times that people were knocked down by others trying to get into a shelter, and trampled to death.<sup>120</sup> Because of the breakdowns in the aircraft warning service, which in the summer of 1944 had lost its extensive radar network and long-range reconnaissance in western Europe, and of the Allied advance into Reich territory, the warning times for the public became a great deal shorter in 1944/5. More and more often there was no warning at all—especially in cities that had been bombed before and where the vulnerable equipment for sounding the signal had frequently been destroyed. In these localities 'siren cars' and the firing of flak guns were meant to warn the public. One diary-writer noted in December 1944 that 'Because the Americans are already near Jülich, the time between

<sup>117</sup> Figures for emergency measures, StadtA Essen, Repertorium 192, § I.

<sup>118</sup> Essen *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 Oct. 1944 ('Vorentwarnung'); *Westfälischer Beobachter*, 28 Sept. 1944 ('Neues Signal "Akute Luftgefahr"').

<sup>119</sup> Römer diary (9 Oct. 1944), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>120</sup> Instances of 'bunker panic' were evidently not uncommon. In a bunker on the Hermannsplatz in Berlin some 30 persons were killed in this way in January 1944, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, xi. 42 (3 Jan. 1944). On 18 Nov. 1944 35 persons died in Wanne-Eickel, and on the same day 16 in Dortmund, Blank, 'Dortmund,' 96 n. 53.

the warning being given and the planes arriving is so short that there's scarcely time to take shelter. When the sirens go, everyone runs like mad.'<sup>121</sup>

Specially important, and in some circumstances on the home front a matter of life or death if one did not want to be unprepared when one's own town came under attack, was reliable information about the situation in the air. Access to information disseminated as widely as possible also of course had a psychological aspect, since official announcements were trusted less and less and people tried to get their own picture of what was going on from as many sources and media as possible—sometimes even including listening to Allied broadcasts.<sup>122</sup> On the other hand the authorities, and especially the Party, tried to channel the flow of information, although not always successfully. In March 1944, at the request of the Party chancellery and in agreement with the C-in-C Luftwaffe and the propaganda minister Goebbels, responsibility for passing on the content of air situation reports and take-cover orders to the public via the cable broadcast system—previously a task for the Luftwaffe—was handed over to the Gauleiters and Reich defence commissioners.<sup>123</sup> At the same time all broadcasting stations in Germany transmitted, every hour on the hour, an 'announcement to the Reich' summarizing the situation in the air. Since the summer of 1943 the Gau authorities had been making use of the existing telephone network to extend the cable broadcast system, to which public and private air-raid shelters and government and Party offices were connected.<sup>124</sup> The cable network was used to broadcast not only orders from the Party and administration and the Gau command HQ's reports on the situation in the air, but also light music, commentary, and news reports:<sup>125</sup> 'The cable radio is on, and the map is alongside my plate. While I eat, I keep track of which way the enemy formations are flying. We keep one ear on the air situation report, and the other on what's happening outside.'<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, cable radio was 'eavesdrop-proof' and could not be interfered with by 'the enemy', so it could also be used for issuing coded orders. Yet another advantage of it was that it could then be made difficult to listen to enemy transmitters.<sup>127</sup> In air-raid shelters and their homes

<sup>121</sup> Römer diary (25 Dec. 1944), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>122</sup> See 'Erwähnung von Falschmeldungen und verspäteter Alarmauslösung' [Mention of incorrect reports and late air-raid warnings] in *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6458 (SD reports on domestic matters, 30 Mar. 1944).

<sup>123</sup> Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*, 316; Brunswig, *Feuersturm*, 388–9; Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 106–7.

<sup>124</sup> Kreis HQ Oberhausen to the mayor, 26 July 1943, re cable broadcast in large bunkers and public shelters, StadtA Oberhausen, Akte Tiefbauamt/47. On the use made and organization of the cable network see Hampe, *Zivile Luftschutz*, 316. As a contemporary source, *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5982 (report on trial of the air-raid warning system, 8 Nov. 1943).

<sup>125</sup> File note by Gau propaganda office for Southern Westphalia (Dec. 1943), StA Münster, Gauleitung Westfalen-Süd No. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Römer diary (8 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>127</sup> Reichspropaganda HQ, 1 July 1943, re expansion of shortwave stations and confiscation of radio receivers, BA NS 8/316.

the population listened not only to the cable broadcasts from the Gau command HQs and Reich radio to find out about incoming aircraft, but also to the extensive situation reports from the Luftwaffe fighter division stations, such as the 'Primadonna' transmitter.<sup>128</sup> Additional information came from the flak organization's transmitters such as 'Domino' for 22 Flak Division's area (Dortmund), or 'Elefant' for 14 Flak Div. at Dresden. Special maps were needed for identifying the Luftwaffe's grid squares such as 'Nordpol-Paula/Nordpol-Quelle' (NP/NQ, roughly the Hagen-Wuppertal area), and a great many copies of these were in circulation among the public. For those down in the cellars and bunkers, when the Luftwaffe reports and cable radio indicated that a bomber formation was approaching the grid coordinates of their own town, the only hope left was that it was going to fly on by and not drop any bombs.

<sup>128</sup> See also Bergander, *Dresden*, 20–1. The 'Primadonna' transmitter covering the west of Germany belonged to 3 Fighter Division, and up to August 1944 was located at Deelen near Arnhem; it then moved to Wiedenbrück in Westphalia. The Berlin area was served by the 'Horizont' transmitter near Döberitz (1 Fighter Div.), and northern Germany by 'Kreuzritter' near Stade (2 Fighter Div.). 'Leander' near Schleißheim (7 Fighter Div.) covered southern Germany, while 'Rosenkavalier' near Vienna served Austria and south-east Germany.



## V. Accommodation, Provisioning, and 'Replacement Homes'

### I. PLANNING EMERGENCY HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION

ALREADY by the summer of 1942 the RAF's area bombing raids were causing serious difficulties in providing people with somewhere to live. The towns and cities were short of anywhere to accommodate even temporarily the large numbers of those bombed out and homeless. The deportation of Jews from Germany was seen by some Gauleiters as also an opportunity for acquiring homes for victims of the bombing. For this reason the Hamburg Gauleiter Karl Kaufmann appealed to Hitler and Göring, after a heavy air raid on his city in September 1942, to have the Jews who were still living there 'evacuated'.<sup>1</sup> Soldiers on leave from the front expressed their readiness to kill Jews living in their home towns so that homes could be made available for their bombed-out families.<sup>2</sup>

The deportation of Jews, which was intensified in the spring and summer of 1942, and the dwellings that as planned then became available could not however even begin to solve the problem. The Nazi leadership saw a way out of the housing crisis in a comprehensive campaign to 'create emergency accommodation for the victims of bombing', undertaken by the Reich commissioner for social housing, Robert Ley, and the RMfBuM and GB-Bau, Albert Speer.<sup>3</sup> In big conurbations in the west and north of Germany, after the air raids in the spring and summer of 1942, it was planned to erect large two-storey barracks with a shallow ridged roof, of timber construction, to the 'standard type' designed by the architect Ernst Neufert.<sup>4</sup> Each building contained sixteen apartments, twelve of them with three rooms for small families. The individual barracks were to be grouped like terraced houses on the outskirts of towns, concealed from view from the air by plantations of trees. During the preliminary planning the municipal building offices took into consideration a good transport link with the areas where such emergency housing was set up, since these measures were intended principally for sheltering and accommodating the workforce of industrial firms important to the war effort.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*, 614–15.

<sup>2</sup> Führer, 'Anspruch und Realität', 251. On the connection between finding accommodation for the bombed-out and the forced expulsion of Jews see in general Botz, *Wohnungspolitik*.

<sup>3</sup> Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 241, and circular No. 33/42 from the deputy Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia Heinrich Vetter, 24 Sept. 1942 *re* special measures for creating emergency housing for air-raid victims, StadtA Bochum, coll. Gy-12. Ley was appointed Reich housing commissioner by a Führer decree on 23 Oct. 1942, *RGBL*. I, 1942, 623.

<sup>4</sup> Stier, *Kriegsauftrag*, 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> Technical guidelines from the Reich commissioner for social housing for the design and construction of emergency housing for air-raid victims, timber-construction emergency housing, September 1942, StadtA Bochum, coll. Gy-12.

In the Gau of Southern Westphalia, hit by innumerable air raids, it was at the turn of the year 1942/3 planned to build 320 emergency dwellings in 20 semi-detached units.<sup>6</sup> This building programme, which in January 1943 had even been exempted from the general ban on building work and thus put on a par with construction projects of the arms industry and military works such as the Atlantic Wall, was however given no high priority by the public authorities, industry, or the Party. In the end, the ambitiously planned emergency housing programme fizzled out in the spring of 1943 when the air war became fiercer. Not infrequently, more people were bombed out of their homes within a few hours in a single German city than the number of houses the planners had, in the previous autumn, estimated would be needed each year over the whole of the Reich.

With Hitler's decree of 9 September 1943 creating a German housing relief organization under Ley (*Deutsche Wohnungshilfswerk*, DWH), the Nazi leadership attempted to combat the extremely high loss of housing stock with a new 'social housing construction programme'.<sup>7</sup> As the housing planners saw it, private persons as well as industrial concerns and municipalities too were to use the opportunity to put up emergency housing estates of buildings accommodating one or several families. In the autumn of 1943 'Reich standard type 001' designed by the architect Hans Spiegel was declared the mandatory model.<sup>8</sup> These huts, built from timber planks and prefabricated parts and to be erected by 'self- and community-build' teams, each had two rooms providing a total floor area of 20 square metres for four to five persons, with a useful life of ten years. The regime subsidized the building of these wooden huts with a grant of RM1,700. From early 1944 those building the prefabricated parts included Jewish forced labourers from the ghetto in Łódź (Litzmannstadt), in a factory set up there. After fabrication was moved in the autumn of 1944, production was continued by inmates of the satellite concentration camp near Königs Wusterhausen in Brandenburg.<sup>9</sup> Even at the time they were built, these wood-plank huts, dubbed *Leylauben* ('Ley arbours') by the public, were a crude makeshift—something even Nazi propaganda was unable to whitewash.

A meeting in Essen in September 1943 between building advisers from the Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk—after Berlin and Hamburg one of the projected main areas for providing the emergency housing—and representatives

<sup>6</sup> Head of the Gau action team on the creation of emergency housing for air-raid victims in Gau Westfalen-Süd to the mayor of Bochum, 12 Oct. 1942, *re* allocation of emergency dwellings for Gau Westfalen-Süd by the Reich commissioner for social housing construction, StadtA Bochum, coll. Gy-12.

<sup>7</sup> Führer decree on the creation of the Deutsche Wohnungshilfswerks, 9 Sept. 1943, *RGBl.* I, 1943, 535; decree by the Reich housing commissioner on the building of emergency housing for air-raid victims, 22 Sept. 1943, StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Akten Behelfsheime. On the DWH see Stier, *Kriegsauftrag*; Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 241; Harlander, *Zwischen Heimstätte und Wohnmaschine*, 263–4, 267–9.

<sup>8</sup> Stier, *Kriegsauftrag*, 12–13; the author also gives a detailed description of the DWH and the building programme.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 80–5.

of senior police authorities, mining, industry, and charitable housing organizations in the Rhineland and Ruhr discussed how the estates of emergency housing could be incorporated into the development plans for the Ruhr area 'after final victory'.<sup>10</sup> The municipalities tended to the view that the emergency buildings should be laid out in such a way that they could later serve as huts for those cultivating allotments. For reasons of 'air-raid safety', the groups of these buildings should be sited in areas on the outer edges of cities. In spite of such reasoning, those at the meeting were aware of the problems this emergency housing campaign was posing, as in his closing sentence the Siedlungsverband's director, Albert Lange, stressed that 'using crude emergency constructions well beyond the end of the war . . . [would] either allow them to deteriorate into accommodation for social misfits, or lead to attempts to gain more living space by adding on ugly extensions'.<sup>11</sup> But these expert objections, which must surely be seen as realistic, did nothing to put a brake on the vast enthusiasm of Party officials in their planning and propaganda for the emergency housing initiative.

In August 1943 the Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia, Albert Hoffmann, regarded as an expert on air war matters, set out at the request of the Party chancellery his main ideas on the problem—an extremely important one at that time—of finding accommodation for those who had been bombed out of their homes.<sup>12</sup> In these he turned against the emergency housing that he himself had publicly supported and had been planned by Ley as head of the DHW, comparing it when talking to other Party members with 'gypsy encampments from times past'. With regard to the effects of the earlier raids on Hamburg Hoffmann commented: 'Ultimately we may however assume that our new weapons will come increasingly into use, and will finally make raids—like those we have seen on Hamburg—impossible for the enemy to carry out on this large scale.'<sup>13</sup> Hoffmann proposed a ruthless requisitioning of empty accommodation as a way of solving the problem. The state and municipal administrations described him, in this connection, as too 'soft' and 'weak' to deal with his current tasks and those that could be expected in the future. For psychological reasons he felt it was more efficient for those who had been bombed out to be housed in their old locality for the time being, rather than have cities set up clusters of emergency housing on their periphery. But by this time even proposals from someone high up in home front civil defence circles had long since been overtaken by events.

In Hamburg alone, in August 1943, the bombing left almost a million people out in the street, and no emergency housing programme was going to be able to provide them with somewhere to live in the medium term. In March 1944 the Reich office for regional planning calculated that there was a need

<sup>10</sup> Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk, 27 Sept. 1943, to the region's mayors and rural counsellors, *re* record of the meeting on 24 Sept. 1943 in Essen, StadtA Bochum, coll. D-Bau 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Telex (copy) from Hoffmann to Hellmuth Friedrichs, PK, 25 Aug. 1943, BA, NS 6/570, 173–83.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 174.

over the Reich as a whole for 657,000 emergency dwellings for the 1.9 million persons who had to be 'billeted out'.<sup>14</sup> The plans for the series construction of a million emergency dwelling units a year for the DHW proved to belong to the realms of fantasy. There were neither the raw materials this would need, nor enough conscript labour to prefabricate the components, and the hutments planned for places like Berlin were for the most part never built.<sup>15</sup> In the Gau of Northern Westphalia, for instance, a total of 3,113 emergency dwelling units had been completed up to 1 May 1944, while 4,337 were still under construction. Over the entire Reich around 53,000 units had been produced by the end of June 1944.<sup>16</sup>

From the summer of 1943 the KLV and evacuation of women and the elderly resulted in the migration of large parts of the population from the air war affected areas,<sup>17</sup>—and with them a potential workforce that from 1943 had included in particular German women. At a DHW meeting in Dortmund in December 1943 Theo Hupfauer, speaking as head of the DAF's Rhine-Ruhr action team and a member of Speer's Ruhr Staff, stressed an important aspect of the emergency housing campaign: 'The German Housing Relief has to be looked on not as a building campaign, but as a high-priority political campaign.'<sup>18</sup> Accommodating bombed-out workers in emergency dwellings on the edges of cities and within reach of the factories would, Hupfauer said, avert the mass evacuations that presented a grave danger to maintaining an efficient armaments industry. The emergency housing campaign therefore, in the view of the head of the DAF 'Ruhr workers' scheme, had less to do with the protection and welfare of the 'productive' population than with preserving their labour capacity for arms production and simplifying supervision of the workforce. Early in 1944 propaganda measures were needed to improve public acceptance of the emergency housing, which remained low despite a financial incentive given to the building of it. In March that year the Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia opened to 'persons in executive and planning' in local authorities and industrial concerns a 'Gau competition for the best emergency dwellings development', in which the objective was less the appearance and functionalism of these barracks camps than rapidity of construction by self-help labour.<sup>19</sup> While the public did not give the government-subsidized 'Ley arbours' the welcome the Nazi leadership had been looking for, a number of

<sup>14</sup> *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Stier, *Kriegsauftrag*, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 183.

<sup>17</sup> The term 'air war affected area' (*Luftkriegsgebiet*) was coined during a meeting on 28 May 1943 at the ministry of the interior. It was designed to permit certain state-of-emergency laws for a region, which the RVK could apply to the minister for and would be decided on by the ILA, report of a meeting on 28 May 1943, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 103 06541–58.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the DWH conference in the Deutsches Haus, Dortmund, on 20 Dec. 1943, StadtA Bochum, coll. D-Bau 42.

<sup>19</sup> Gauleitung Westfalen-Süd, Amt des Gauwohnungskommissars, to the mayor of Bochum, 10 Jan. 1944, re Gauleiter Hoffmann's plan for opening a emergency housing competition between local authorities and industrial concerns, StadtA Bochum, coll. Gy-12; 'Gauwettbewerb für die beste Behelfsheim-Siedlung durch Gauleiter Hoffmann', in *Bochumer Anzeiger*, 2 Mar. 1944.

industrial concerns were still, in the summer and autumn of 1944, making plans for a great many multi-storey, timber-built emergency homes in which to house their (German) workers; because of the persisting shortage of materials and the way the war was going these plans could however in most cases not be carried through.<sup>20</sup> The whole of the Housing Relief's emergency housing programme, the organizing of which had in the Reich and individual regions been given major project status, proved in the end to be very largely a propaganda fantasy and an economic planning failure. On the home front the provision of housing was in a state of permanent crisis. After a visit to the Gau main city of Bochum in December 1944, Goebbels wrote, of the conditions in which some 10,000 of its inhabitants were still living, 'to say living is an exaggeration; they make their homes in holes in the ground and in cellars.'<sup>21</sup>

## 2. PROVIDING FOR THE BOMBED-OUT, 1943-1945

From 1944 onwards, the Allied air raids brought crisis to a supply situation that was already showing strain.<sup>22</sup> To cope with the effects of the air war, both the NSV and the local and government authorities had already since 1943 set up food stores, arrangements for provisioning the population, and reception and assembly centres for those who had been bombed out. The first experience of heavy bombing however showed that even extensive preparations and an organization for ensuring supplies can very quickly break down. During the 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne all the kitchens for feeding the public were destroyed, and the 59,000 or so made homeless had to be cared for mostly by emergency centres improvised by the Party.<sup>23</sup> The city of Essen had, in 1942, prepared for a heavy air attack by acquiring eight mass-catering kitchens and a feeding capacity of 35,000 litres a day. In the first big raid on 5/6 March 1943 it was precisely these kitchens that, with the exception of three fairly low-capacity ones, were put totally out of action, which meant that the feeding of the population had broken down. The NSV immediately improvised the use of large kitchens in neighbouring towns that had so far not been so heavily bombed, while at the same time the Wehrmacht units stationed locally made more than 60 field kitchens available. Over just on two weeks the latter supplied 25,000 litres of food each day,<sup>24</sup> and up to the end of March a Wehrmacht rations supply train brought in daily an additional 15,000 litres of provisions. The kitchens organized by the NSV handed out, over this period, a total of

<sup>20</sup> The Reichswerke Hermann Göring AG's Friedrich der Große mining company in Herne was in summer of 1944 planning to build multi-family emergency housing units, see StadtA Herne, coll. Herne, Akten Behelfsheimen.

<sup>21</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 409 (13 Dec. 1944).

<sup>22</sup> On this see primarily *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 515-36; also Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 194-220.

<sup>23</sup> Final report by Gauleiter of Cologne-Aachen, 15 June 1942, repr. in Rütger, *Köln*, 203-4, 209-10.

<sup>24</sup> Report on experience of the air raids on Essen on 5 and 12 Mar. 1943, 44-6, StadtA Essen, register 102, § I, No. 1126d, also quoted in what follows.

893,420 hot meals, and occasionally up to 73,000 individual portions a day. A further 30,000 loaves of bread and 7,500 kilograms of sausage were distributed to the public. The NS Women's League cooked a special porridge diet for the approximately 5,000 small children in Essen. To ensure the extra supply of meat for the large number of meals being distributed, the staff of the municipal abattoir was boosted with 54 additional butchers from the Wehrmacht. Further relief goods and food came in from the surrounding countryside.

At first sight, this emergency provisioning appears to have been adequate and well organized; but this is deceptive. The relatively generous supply situation in Essen after the bombing in March 1943 was possible solely because at that time only this single city was being affected so seriously. In the months that followed, however, a number of simultaneous air raids caused a crisis. The resources and storage depots were now scarcely able to cope with ensuring a proper supply of food to the bombed cities. An inadequate supply of food however had a substantial negative effect on the morale and attitude of the home front public.<sup>25</sup> The special allocations distributed to the population after air raids, too, were already by the summer of 1943 far from meeting expectations. All 'basic consumers' over the age of 18 in Stuttgart, for instance, were supposed after a heavy raid on the city to receive 50 grams of coffee and half a litre of spirits, while those under 18 were given instead 125 grams of confectionery.<sup>26</sup>

The inhabitants of the Westphalian town of Gladbeck were after an air raid in May 1943 issued with a special allocation totalling 2.6 tonnes of coffee, 3.3 tonnes of confectionery, and 53,300 half-litre bottles of spirits.<sup>27</sup> When the Gladbeckers were due to receive a special allocation six months later, the coffee had to be left out, due to 'supply difficulties'. When the promised special allocation did not match what was expected, or difficult distribution times meant it could not be collected by part of the public, this gave rise to much indignation and a great many rumours.<sup>28</sup> Bread, potatoes, and meat were among the basic foodstuffs the availability of which on the home front became increasingly difficult from 1943 on. One NS cell leader's 'report on morale' commented, on the subject of inadequate supplies of potatoes, 'How people behave here at home stands or falls with the food we get and how fairly it is distributed. If I can't manage to fill his lunchbox, my husband can't carry on doing heavy work, a worker's wife said. What use are the pretty coupons on the potato ration card to us, if one after another of them can't be spent?'<sup>29</sup> Because

<sup>25</sup> See Milward, *German Economy*, 7–14.

<sup>26</sup> *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 211 (announcement by mayor of Stuttgart, 26 Feb. 1944).

<sup>27</sup> Reich ministry of agriculture to the regional food office of the province of Westphalia, 12 June 1944, StadtA Gladbeck, coll. C-435. The ration per person matched the special allocation mentioned in Stuttgart.

<sup>28</sup> For examples see *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 138, 161–2, 282.

<sup>29</sup> Report on morale, Cell VI, Oberhausen-Osterfeld, 18 Dec. 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP-Kreisleitung Oberhausen, No. 2, ii.



of the growing intensity of the air war, provisioning the population, and especially those who had been bombed out, became a balancing act between the management of reserves in emergencies and the increasing demands from a public more and more severely afflicted by the air raids.<sup>30</sup>

To get halfway to maintaining supplies, the shortages that had ensued had to a major extent to be made up from reserves held all over Germany.<sup>31</sup> Another route taken by the Nazi rulers was greater exploitation of occupied countries, whose economies and populations were used as producers, reservoirs of raw materials, and suppliers of essential goods.<sup>32</sup> Between July 1941 and the end of 1943, for example, those in the Reich were able to draw on at least 1.6 million tonnes of grain, almost 54,000 tonnes of pulses, over 63,000 tonnes of fresh meat, around 180 million eggs, more than 6,000 tonnes of poultry, 46,000 tonnes of sugar, and 695,000 tonnes of oilseed from the occupied eastern territories alone.<sup>33</sup> 'Bread was getting more and more scarce', a foreman working with a team on war-critical repairs on a waterworks noted in July 1943. In the end the food office allowed him and his wife, on appeal, an extra daily 150 g of bread, 20 g of sausage, and 15 g of margarine. 'This isn't even enough for a sandwich' was his comment on the extra allocation. Subsequently, he received for four weeks a special ration card guaranteeing a weekly amount of 600 g of bread, 200 g of meat, and 20 g of margarine: 'Not a lot, but better than nothing at all.'<sup>34</sup> Yet already by the end of the month he was forced to say of his food supply 'Without the extra we won't be able to carry on much longer.'<sup>35</sup>

On top of the difficulty with the supply of foodstuffs, there were considerable problems with clothing, shoes, and other consumer goods. The fourth clothing ration card issued on 1 January 1943 was already no longer for a year but had to last for eighteen months;<sup>36</sup> as the bottlenecks in textiles manufacture were, after the air raids, exacerbated by the need to provide for those bombed out and evacuated as well, use of the clothing card was from 1 August 1943 limited to persons whose homes had been destroyed.<sup>37</sup> The advance notice given of this limitation caused a mass onslaught on shops selling textile goods. Much the same occurred with the supply of shoes, which was 'obtained' partly from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Italy.<sup>38</sup> During the last three years of the war the enormous demand for everyday consumer items could likewise scarcely be met. Especially scarce were domestic goods, from cookers through saucepans

<sup>30</sup> See for a local example Wiggen-Jux, 'Die Versorgung der Kölner Zivilbevölkerung'.

<sup>31</sup> See on this *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II, esp. 198–229.

<sup>32</sup> Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 185. In the retreat from the occupied countries of western and eastern Europe, German troops took with them 'all movable goods', on orders from the Wehrmacht operations staff, see *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 155; also *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 519.

<sup>33</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 220.

<sup>34</sup> Römer diary (15 June 1943), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. (29 June 1943).

<sup>37</sup> See *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5790–5 (SD reports on home affairs, 20 Sept. 1943), 6161–5 (16 Dec. 1943).

<sup>38</sup> Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 113–14.

<sup>36</sup> Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 112–13.



to knives and forks and other household items. Production of consumer goods for the civilian market did indeed increase up to 1943, for example by 25 per cent for tableware and even 50 per cent for beds, but was far from meeting the needs.<sup>39</sup> After Hamburg was bombed in July/August 1943, only 20,000 cooking pots had by November that year been forthcoming as replacements for the 400,000 or so people who had lost their homes.<sup>40</sup> The evacuee households, too, received only a fraction of the replacements announced for household goods that had been destroyed. There was also a great shortage of furniture, kitchens, and general equipment for dwellings, a great deal of which in the big cities fell victim to the bombs.<sup>41</sup>

In many towns and cities widespread damage to the public utility systems led, from 1944 especially, to the population being without electricity, water, and gas for days on end, if not often weeks or even months. Even in mining regions the allocation of coal for domestic heating grew steadily smaller after 1942, such that even propaganda campaigns about economizing on it, like the 'Kohlenklau' (the 'Coal Thief', a cartoon character akin to the 'Squander Bug' used in wartime Britain to put over a similar message),<sup>42</sup> had no appreciable effect. The peak of this development in the economy was finally reached in 1944/5.<sup>43</sup> The loss of the occupied Soviet territories such as the Ukraine as the 'granary' of the Reich,<sup>44</sup> together with the industrial regions of France and Belgium, and especially the loss of East Prussia and Silesia in 1944/5, had an ever greater impact on the overall supply situation. The energy value of the rations for (German) basic consumers had admittedly risen from 1,750 calories in 1942 to 1,980 in 1943, and dropped back only slightly to 1,930 calories in the following year, but as 1944 turned into 1945 there was a drastic cut to 1,671 calories.<sup>45</sup> In Münster in October 1941, for instance, the weekly bread ration was still 2,250 grams, but by October 1944 had been reduced to 1,500.<sup>46</sup> Over the same period the weekly allocation of meat dropped from 400 grams to 250. The only thing that stayed at the same level in Münster up to 1944 was the sugar ration, at 225 grams per week.

There were various extra allowances for workers and air-raided victims, which were also repeatedly cut right up to the end of the war. By the beginning of 1945 propaganda could no longer hide the fact that food supplies had broken down, as was evident in one city in western Germany: 'Immense

<sup>39</sup> USSBS Report No. 3: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy, 131, 136, NA, RG 243:3.

<sup>40</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6223 (SD reports on home affairs, 6 Jan. 1944).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 6227–8.

<sup>42</sup> The 'Kohlenklau' cartoon was used in propaganda in 1943/4; the name was, for example, used for an arithmetic book for soldiers, a lunar calendar, a book *Kohlenklau is out to get you, wherever you go!*, and a broadsheet poster 'Who'll catch Kohlenklau—the villain?'

<sup>43</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 530; see also Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 121, 148.

<sup>44</sup> The term 'granary' was used by, among others, Goebbels in his article 'Wofür?', *Das Reich*, 31 May 1942, repr. in *Weltherrschaft im Visier*, doc. 136, 327.

<sup>45</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 244.

<sup>46</sup> Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 267 n. 97.

quantities of livestock and foodstuffs have been lost [in East Prussia and Silesia]. Which means that our food rations are stretched; now we have to manage five weeks with the same ration instead of four. When I still had a store in the cellar, it was no problem, but now we have to live from hand to mouth. There's semolina and pasta only for invalids and small children.'<sup>47</sup> In the closing weeks of the war Goebbels noted that, on top of the burdens of the air war, the population had become accustomed to hunger as well.<sup>48</sup> In cities, waiting for foodstuffs to be distributed was a feature of everyday life: 'In the few hours free of air-raid warnings, there are long queues in front of shops, especially bakers' shops.'<sup>49</sup> In many large cities the poor supply situation led to more black markets springing up,<sup>50</sup> dealing—very much to the irritation of the Party and authorities—in foodstuffs as well as consumer and luxury goods. Tobacco and cigarettes became, as sought-after bartering items, a new form of currency that—unlike the Reichsmark—remained stable into the immediate post-war period.<sup>51</sup> 'I've just been offered a chicken for 100 cigarettes. I shall have to think about that. Everything's a constant struggle. Now and then I get a couple of eggs for cigarettes. I'm setting cigarettes aside for the winter,' one 'basic consumer' recorded in June 1944 after a visit to his town's black market.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. REPLACEMENT GOODS FOR AIR-RAID VICTIMS

In *Documenten deutscher Kriegsschäden*, the extensive compilation by the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, one finds the following in connection with a report by the previous secretary of the ILA Theodor Ellgering: 'Incidentally, in cases where there had been damage on a large scale, "aid trains" were also used to provide those had suffered with the most urgently needed everyday items, in particular the necessary clothing. For clothing, these trains brought complete outfits for men, women, and children, from shirts to coats and sorted by size, together with consumer goods from cooking pots through toothbrushes to toys for the weeping children. People who benefited from this welfare could count themselves among the lucky ones.'<sup>53</sup> The path taken by the Nazi leadership during the war to guarantee to at least some extent the replacement of goods lost by air-raid victims is not covered in the compiled *Dokumenten*, which appeared as a series of separate volumes from 1958 onwards. Yet it was clear at the latest after the hearings at

<sup>47</sup> Römer diary (7 Feb. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>48</sup> See Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 99–100, 184–5.

<sup>49</sup> O. Rommel diary (14 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>50</sup> Covered at length in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 531–6; see also USSBS Report No. 64b: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale, i. 90–1, NA, RG 243:64.

<sup>51</sup> USSBS Report No. 64b: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on German Morale, i.1, 122, NA, RG 243:64; *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 139, 169.

<sup>52</sup> Römer diary (24 June 1944), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>53</sup> *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, ii/1. 186.

the Nuremberg trial of major war criminals, and the publication of the trial documents in 1947 (in German as well as English), that there had been a link between the providing of replacement goods occasioned by the air war and the persecuting, deporting, and murdering of Europe's Jews.<sup>54</sup>

The compensation for household utensils and everyday objects, promised by the propaganda and enshrined in law, led the German authorities and the Party into an impasse. The high number of applicants put the war damage offices in the bombed cities increasingly under strain, since the material resources for providing adequate replacements were largely lacking, and financial compensation was in most cases unacceptable to those affected. It was consequently laid down, in order No. 11 enacted under the Reich Citizenship Law dated 25 November 1941, that the ownership of assets and property of Jews 'who have their usual abode abroad' fell, with their loss of citizenship, to the Reich.<sup>55</sup> This order applied to the removal goods of Jews who had emigrated that were in store in ports in western Europe, but also to the property of all Jews living in Germany or German-occupied countries, who counted as stateless. The legal ruling made it possible for the Reich finance ministry, as the authority responsible, to expropriate Jewish property in Germany to benefit the Reich without any problem, since it was formally covered in law. This however also created a legal handle for making available urgently needed replacements for bombed-out families. It opened up the possibility for the Gauleiters, in their capacity as defence commissioners, after taking over in spring 1943 the responsibility for these measures already called the *M-Aktion* or *Möbel-Aktion* (furniture campaign) and with the slogan 'making up for the damage by taking booty', to go ahead (with the support of the civil and military administrations) with their own requisitioning of furniture and household goods in the German-occupied territories.<sup>56</sup>

With the first wide-scale deportations, in the winter of 1941/42, of the Jews still living in the Reich, the property of this group of people came under the state's 'administration of assets'.<sup>57</sup> A prominent role in the campaign of pillage and plunder was played—alongside the Gauleiters-cum-RVKs and finance authorities—by most of all the Reich ministry for the occupied eastern territories (RMfdbO) under Alfred Rosenberg. The 'Rosenberg Task Force' was also responsible for the plundering of works of art and exhibits from museums in the occupied territories. On 18 December 1941 Rosenberg had urged Hitler to hand the living accommodation of Jews in the occupied west over to German air-raid victims on favourable terms. After Hitler had agreed to this, the Party chancellery passed the order on to the Wehrmacht high command on 31 December 1941 for the military commanders in Belgium and northern

<sup>54</sup> IMT, xxxviii. 25–32.

<sup>55</sup> *RGBl.* I, 1941, 722–4. On the background to and implementation of this see Adler, 'Der verwaltete Mensch', 491–493, 500–2. On the treatment of 'enemy Jewish assets' also Lindner, *Das Reichskommissariat*, 135–42.

<sup>56</sup> Blank, 'Ersatzbeschaffung', 92; Beer, *Kriegsalltag*, 157, 181.

<sup>57</sup> Bajohr, *Aryanisation in Hamburg*, 277–83.

France and the Reich commissioner for the occupied Netherlands.<sup>58</sup> In March 1942—at the time the mass deportations from the occupied countries in the west began—a western office ('Dienststelle West') was set up in Rosenberg's ministry to take charge of inventorying and passing on confiscated Jewish property, with command units in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Between 1942 and 1944 these offices took over large quantities of items to be transported to the Reich in order to at least partially satisfy the need there to replace household goods that had been destroyed in air raids.<sup>59</sup> The first large-scale confiscations of Jewish property had however already taken place in early 1941 in Hamburg and elsewhere, when the removal goods of Jews from all parts of Germany who had fled the country, left in store in the ports, were auctioned off publicly to the benefit of the Gestapo.<sup>60</sup>

When the Jewish population were deported from the Reich en masse in winter 1941/2 and spring/summer 1942, the finance offices with the participation of the local administrations sequestered their goods and chattels. The NSV, which in the 'furniture campaign' took on a central mediating role between government, Party, and population, organized either their distribution free to air-raid victims or their sale at low prices. From the finance offices' public announcements of the auction it was frequently clear that these were household furnishings and domestic goods from 'non-Aryan' ownership.<sup>61</sup> A watershed in the provision of replacement goods came with the RAF's 1,000-bomber raid on the Rhine metropolis Cologne at the end of May 1942, the series of raids on Duisburg in July 1942, and then the similarly disastrous raids on places like Hamburg and Saarbrücken. The British area-bombing raids from March 1942 onwards led not only to the highest number of deaths thus far among the German civilian population, but for the first time also the destruction within a short space of time of the furnishings of German households by the tens of thousands. It was undoubtedly this that led the 'Rosenberg Task Force' from the spring of 1942 to step up the 'furniture campaign' in parallel with the deportations of French Jews, so as to cover at least to some small extent the greater needs in the bombed cities.<sup>62</sup> July 1942 also saw the first deportations on a larger scale in Belgium and the Netherlands.

The procedure observed bureaucratic rules: after taking possession of all the goods in them, the officials sealed the dwellings the interior of which was from that moment confiscated for the Reich. In this way, in Paris alone, twenty appointed officials dealt within barely two years with more than 38,000 dwellings and their contents.<sup>63</sup> At times there were 150 trucks a day in the French

<sup>58</sup> Rosenberg's initiatives and responsibility in this area were examined on 16 Apr. 1946 before the International Military Tribunal, IMT, xi. 522–5.

<sup>59</sup> There is a description and survey of the 'furniture campaigns' in IMT, xxxviii. 25–32 (doc. 188-L and evidence item US-386). This involves reports from the RMfdbO's Dienststelle West. See also the documentation in *Betrifft: 'Aktion 3'*, 45–61.

<sup>60</sup> Bajohr, *Aryanisation in Hamburg*, 278.

<sup>62</sup> Herbert, *Deutsche Militärverwaltung*.

<sup>61</sup> On this also Rüther, *Köln*, 94, 99.

<sup>63</sup> IMT, xxxviii. 38, 26 (report of the RMfdbO's Dienststelle West, August 1944).

capital, with up to 1,500 workers from French removal firms busy loading them with the belongings of deported Jews. Since French, Belgian, and Dutch workers employed in the 'furniture campaign' tried to sabotage the smooth running of these measures, Rosenberg's task force set up two large central camps where over 700 Jews were used as forced labour on transport and sorting tasks. Furniture, household utensils, clothing, toys, and a great deal else was either taken in charge by the Gau headquarters or sent directly to the city authorities and NSV for distribution to their populations. Industrial firms received whole shiploads for their 'bomb victim staff'.<sup>64</sup> This system was very quickly perfected, such that by 1943 the Dienststelle West had its own (Jewish) craftsmen to repair damaged furniture and utensils before these were shipped out.<sup>65</sup>

This is reminiscent of the organization and handling of the property of murdered Jews collected in the extermination camps, the 'putting to use' of which by the SS even included their bodies with the 'confiscation' of hair and, in particular, gold teeth. Where the bombing war and its effects are concerned, the 'furniture campaign' shows, besides, the bureaucratic background to Nazi terror. Without the collaboration and smooth functioning of the administrative machinery of the local and state authorities, the administrative development of the campaigns and distribution of the plunder among the population could hardly have taken place. The sources leave no doubt: the officials and staff working in the local administrations were fully aware that the furniture and other goods had been owned by Jews—as, for instance, in the accommodation office in Gelsenkirchen where a report remarked that 'this involves without exception used, and sometimes valuable, polished and richly decorated furniture to come from Jewish ownership'.<sup>66</sup> But the public, too, was in no way kept in ignorance of where the deliveries of replacement goods came from,<sup>67</sup> as is evident from the account by one Hamburg librarian: 'There was no want of supplies. For from all over the Europe we had conquered and plundered there came a stream of goods that had been stolen or paid for with worthless paper money . . . Ships were waiting in the docks to be unloaded of confiscated Jewish property from Holland. Ordinary housewives in Veddel were suddenly wearing fur coats, dealing in coffee and jewellery, and were getting antique furniture and carpets from the port, from Holland, from France.'<sup>68</sup> In September 1943 the SD in Frankfurt on Oder and elsewhere were however reporting that what the public referred to as 'Jew furniture' had for the most part been unusable due to 'damage in transport and infestation with vermin', which had led to expressions of annoyance. Other items of furniture, a report from Münster said, had obviously come from large villas and was unusable

<sup>64</sup> *Westfälische Landeszeitung*, 'Rote Erde', 17 Jan. 1944.

<sup>65</sup> IMT, xxxviii. 27 (report by the RMfdbO's Dienststelle West, August 1944).

<sup>66</sup> Report from Gelsenkirchen accommodation office, 9 Nov. 1942 *re* furniture for air-raid victims, StadtA Gelsenkirchen, Akte o/XVIII/14.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6228 (SD report on home affairs, 6 Jan. 1944).

<sup>68</sup> Seydelmann, *Gefährdete Balance*, 105.

in the rooms of small apartments.<sup>69</sup> The same sort of thing was reported in December 1943 from Hamburg, where the public were saying that, because of the defects in the 'Jew furniture' from France and Holland coming up for auction, such replacement supplies 'were not worth the time, money, transport, and organization'.<sup>70</sup>

In early November 1943 the RMfdbO's Dienststelle West had seized and sealed more than 52,800 dwellings in occupied France and Belgium. By that time, 47,569 complete sets of household furnishings had already been shipped to Germany as replacement deliveries.<sup>71</sup> In the Netherlands 22,623 dwellings were emptied between March 1942 and July 1943, with the transport to Germany involving 586 cargo ships and 178 railway goods wagons.<sup>72</sup> The extent of this plunder illustrates most of all the amount of rail traffic there was between the occupied western countries and the Reich. Up to July 1944, according to a probably incomplete listing, a total of 18,665 wagons from France alone reached numerous German cities, equivalent to complete sets of furnishings for more than 69,000 households.<sup>73</sup> Right up to when Paris was taken by Allied troops, Dienststelle West was still dispatching, between 6 June and 1 August 1944, 372 goods wagons carrying complete sets of household furnishings from the apartments 'cleared out' in the capital. Over the same period, furthermore, the sale of scrap and raw materials brought in a profit of some RM28,000.<sup>74</sup> Exact figures for the number and extent of bargeloads carried on inland waterways are, on the other hand, not now available. Between March and October 1943, the cargoes of seven freight vessels from Antwerp were unloaded in Cologne alone.<sup>75</sup> Besides the deliveries from western Europe there were further transports of sequestered Jewish property from Austria and the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as the Government-General and Hungary.<sup>76</sup> The replacements provided in this way were however able to deal with only a small part of the bomb damage as a whole. In Hamburg alone, between 1941 and 1945, the furniture and domestic goods of around 30,000 deported Jewish families were sold by public auction, at least 100,000 of the city's inhabitants acquiring items that had previously been owned by Jews.<sup>77</sup> But the air raids in July/August 1943 destroyed more household furnishings than Dienststelle West in France and Belgium confiscated, and more than the 'replacement deliveries' were able to carry to the Reich.

<sup>69</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 5821 (SD report on home affairs, 27 Sept. 1943).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. 6228 (SD report on home affairs, 6 Jan. 1944).

<sup>71</sup> IMT, vii. 78 (copy of letter from Rosenberg Task Force, 4 Nov. 1943), and xxxviii. 26 (report from RMfdbO Dienststelle West, August 1944).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxviii. 32 (report from RMfdbO Dienststelle West, 8 Aug. 1944).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 30 (letter from head of Dienststelle West in Paris, 7 Aug. 1944).

<sup>75</sup> *Betrifft: 'Aktion 3'*, 206.

<sup>76</sup> In the summer of 1943, for example, wagons with furnishings and clothing owned by Jews were sent by the trust office in the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to major bombed cities in Germany, and to the Rhine and Ruhr areas; on this see also Adler, 'Der verwaltete Mensch', 597-8.

<sup>77</sup> Bajohr, *Aryanisation in Hamburg*, 279.



## 4. RECONSTRUCTION PLANS

The extensive damage to buildings in the bombed cities led, from summer 1943, to concrete plans being drawn up for reconstruction after final victory. A legal basis for these plans had already been laid by the 'Law on the redesign of German cities' of 4 October 1937. All 'Gau capitals' and five 'Führer cities' (Munich, Linz, Berlin, Nuremberg, and Hamburg), together with a small number of other large cities, were to be built anew after the war in accordance with National Socialist architectural principles, and greatly enlarged.<sup>78</sup> For the architects and town planners working under Albert Speer in his capacity of general inspector of construction, the bombing war provided an opportunity to prepare for Hitler a comprehensive programme of urban renewal and redesign. Already in March 1943 and again in October of that year Speer shared with Hitler his ideas on the subject, which finally received a legal basis in the 'Führer decree on preparations for the reconstruction of bomb-damaged cities' of 11 October 1943.<sup>79</sup> Speer set out the objectives in his memorandum to Hitler as follows: 'In planning account must principally be taken of the fact that here [i.e. through the bombing] we are being given a unique opportunity to make our cities, after the war, again viable from the traffic viewpoint; for there is in general no doubt that with a further growth in traffic our cities (like London and New York) would because of this urban planning disparity go to the wall economically as traffic density increased.'<sup>80</sup> Speer further concluded that the capabilities of the building industry engaged during the war on fortification and armaments projects would be very quickly applied to the task of reconstruction. The armaments industry, too, could be widely involved in the reconstruction process, so that foreseeable structural problems in converting from war to peacetime production could be coped with. At the same time the pool of labour available through the troops being demobilized could be put to good use on reconstruction work.<sup>81</sup>

In December 1943 Speer set up in his ministry the 'planning staff for the reconstruction of destroyed cities', which took up its activities in the following spring.<sup>82</sup> Already by May 1944 the mayors of municipalities that had been selected by the Gauleiters and Speer for reconstruction, which included most of Germany's major cities, were being called on to provide statistics on the nature and extent of the material damage they had suffered.<sup>83</sup> But Goebbels

<sup>78</sup> Durth and Gutschow, *Träume*; Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 164. On urban development and reconstruction plans see also Hohn, 'Der Einfluß'.

<sup>79</sup> Account of Speer's comments to the Führer on the content and objective of urban planning for cities due for reconstruction, August 1943, StadtA Bochum, coll. OB HeI and D-Bau 41/1-2. On the 'Führer decree' see Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 242-4, and for the wording *RGBl.* I, 1943, No. 93, 575-6.

<sup>80</sup> Account of Speer's comments to the Führer on the content and objective of urban planning for cities due for reconstruction, August 1943, StadtA Bochum, coll. OB HeI, and D-Bau 41/1-2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 247-8.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Regierungspräsident Arnsberg to mayors in Gau Westfalen-Süd, 15 May 1944 re demand by the Arbeitsstab Wiederaufbauplanung for rapid provision of details of the damage situation in destroyed cities, StadtA Bochum, coll. OB HeI.



too had as early as the spring of 1943 expressly welcomed Speer's giving of thought to the matter of reconstruction. As chairman of the ILA he had since then been asking the municipalities for an exact tally of the monuments and cultural premises destroyed and damaged by the bombing, so that he could get a relatively accurate overall picture of what damage had been done.

When the results of the damage assessment called for by the planning staff were to hand, it became obvious that there had been a great deal of destruction of the historic building stock in practically all major cities. In particular, the inner cities of Cologne, Frankfurt-am-Main, Augsburg, Lübeck, Rostock, Aachen, and numerous other places were quite literally fields of burnt-out ruins. Only a month after receiving the damage statistics, the reconstruction planning staff issued to local building offices detailed guidelines for the planning and surveying work to be done in localities designated as 'reconstruction cities'.<sup>84</sup> The group's planning work, which carried on right up to March 1945, produced the problems of determining areas of responsibility that arose in all Nazi large-scale projects; yet even influential Gauleiters were unable to make their own reconstruction plans prevail over those of Speer, or to achieve any planning autonomy.<sup>85</sup>

After the war the plans that had been in existence since the autumn of 1943, and in particular the technical solutions found to making use of rubble (for example through salvaging girder iron and building blocks, and designing machinery for reclaiming building materials), often provided the basis for rebuilding the cities. There was very often continuity in the people involved as well, since many of the architects and city surveyors of the post-war years had previously been members of Speer's planning staff.<sup>86</sup> By early 1945 the team of architects under Speer had worked out comprehensive plans for the ruined German cities. For the major cities, as main centres of their region, they foresaw a residential, economic, and administrative structure planned on a National Socialist scale. The housing was to be designed to be 'prestigious' and also optimally planned from the air-raid protection and traffic management viewpoints; the population was to be open to ready surveillance, and accommodated as a *Volksgemeinschaft* easy to monitor. Central parade grounds and monumental cultural and Party buildings were to complete the picture of a model city of martial character.<sup>87</sup> Intimidatingly large, powerful, and impressive—that was how Nazi architects saw the future cityscape, with wide streets and grandiose Party and government buildings dominating the uniformly designed city centres. The priority programme for building giant bunkers from October 1941 and the building measures that went with them, together with the outward design of these air-raid shelters carried out in a few cases, had already foreshadowed a development of this kind. 'The new age will put its stamp on the new way of building!' was how in January 1944

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Arbeitsstab Wiederaufbauplanung zerstörter Städte to the mayor of Bochum, 27 July 1944, *re* Guidelines for statistics showing damage done, StadtA Bochum, coll. OB He1.

<sup>85</sup> Hanke, *Architektur*, 35–40.

<sup>86</sup> Durth, *Deutsche Architekten*, 313–14.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 261–2; see also essentially Durth and Gutschow, *Träume*, i.

a local press release described the incipient reconstruction plans for the Gau capital of Bochum,<sup>88</sup> and in March 1944 the *General-Anzeiger* for the Gau area of Essen indeed waxed visionary with 'Our cities are arising anew. In old tired places there is rebuilding on the ruins.'<sup>89</sup>

The public, however, could find scant sympathy for planning like this, which saw the bombing and the destruction of whole districts as a 'unique opportunity' for remodelling their cities. The SD noted an entirely negative reaction to an article on the plans for reconstruction that appeared in January 1944 in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi Party organ.<sup>90</sup> The article put forward, among others, the view that the bombing war was 'clearing away festering areas, making them free for socialism's healthy, attractive, and efficient buildings'. Given the destruction, human misery, and countless dead the bombing raids were causing, the public was incensed to read this. Official Nazi policy, however, saw the connection quite differently. Speaking to a Berlin conference of Kreis and Gau propaganda heads in January 1944, Goebbels said, 'I am not being cynical when I am in fact grateful to the British for it [the destruction]. When we say today that these shattered cities will later be rebuilt far, far greater and finer, that is no empty phrase, but the truth. It is understandable that a city like Duisburg, for instance, mourns the loss of its opera house . . . But in starting already today to plan the rebuilding after the war, it is being done on such a vast scale that it will be made to last for all time.'<sup>91</sup> Still immediately before the final collapse, in February 1945, Hitler was telling Goebbels that rebuilding the ruined cities after the war would present no problems. He calculated that enough housing capacity could be built in no more than five years from the end of the conflict.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Westfälische Landeszeitung*, 'Rote Erde', 20 Jan. 1944, StadtA Hagen.

<sup>89</sup> *General-Anzeiger*, 14 Mar. 1944, Kriegschronik der Stadt Oberhausen, StadtA Oberhausen.

<sup>90</sup> 'Bombenterror', in *Völkischer Beobachter*, 7 Jan. 1944. On reactions among the public see *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6242 (SD report on home affairs, 13 Jan. 1944).

<sup>91</sup> Proceedings of the conference of Gau and Kreis propaganda heads, Berlin, 10 Jan. 1944, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP 2, ii.

<sup>92</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv. 379 (13 Feb. 1945).

## VI. 'Revenge' and Miracle Weapons Propaganda

### I. THE PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE FROM SPRING 1943

In the industrial regions the public 'attitude' that Goebbels and the regional Nazi leaders had been concerned about more and more urgently since the spring of 1943 proved, despite the heavy bombing, to be still possible to keep under control. A report on public mood from one Kreis HQ makes this clear: 'The attitude of the greatest part of the population is good and solid, despite the fact that among many women a greater level of nervousness and anxiety is evident in the evening and early hours of the night.'<sup>1</sup> From 1942/3, Goebbels replaced the primary goal of propaganda in the first years of the war, that of achieving 'passive approval' among the population, with a strategy of 'strength through fear'. This was intended, in parallel with the preaching of total war in the economic and cultural spheres and in the labour market,<sup>2</sup> to mobilize reserves of strength in the public by summoning up pictures of terror through, for instance, the graphic language used in press reports.<sup>3</sup> At the same time there was on the home front an increasing ideologizing of the war effort and in propaganda,<sup>4</sup> centred not least on the exemplary function created for the 'wars of liberation' of 1813–15, and on historical figures such as Frederick the Great. Nevertheless the air war remained, in propaganda pictures in the newspapers and illustrated magazines, a topic that was covered only with severe limitations on what could be shown.<sup>5</sup> An exception to this was the effects of raids by the German Luftwaffe; those on Britain, for example, were from the autumn of 1940 shown in every detail and with the results they had on the population.<sup>6</sup>

As a reaction to the Allies' intensification of the air war after the spring of 1943 there was a growing desire for revenge among both the political and military leadership and the German public. Only a day after the first big raid on Essen on 5/6 March 1943 Hitler had called for the immediate launching of massive retaliation against British cities, and ordered the appointment at once of a supremo to lead attacks on England.<sup>7</sup> Undertaking such a step at that

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Kreisleiter of Essen to Essen Gau HQ, 28 June 1943 *re* situation report of 23 June 1943 on progress of emergency measures for dealing with bomb damage, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP, ii.

<sup>2</sup> On this see especially *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 905–18, 945–58.

<sup>3</sup> Vieth, 'Die letzte "Volksgemeinschaft"', 274; Bramsted, *Goebbels*, 316–18.

<sup>4</sup> Hancock, *National Socialist Leadership*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> Kohlmann-Viand, *NS-Presspolitik*, 119; Vieth, 'Die letzte "Volksgemeinschaft"', 271–3.

<sup>6</sup> Vieth, 'Die letzte "Volksgemeinschaft"', 273.

<sup>7</sup> *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 238; Balke, *Luftkrieg in Europa*, pt. 2, 215 (Hitler's order on appointing an 'Attack Leader England' of 6 Mar. 1943); *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 406–20.

time however proved to be wishful thinking, as the Luftwaffe was no longer in a state to wage any really effective air war against Britain. Nonetheless the sporadic night-time raids carried out on British cities including London in the spring and summer of 1943 were presented to the German public as a successful and large-scale retaliation for the far more severe bombing by the RAF.<sup>8</sup> At the same time the army's rocket programme that had begun in 1942, and the Luftwaffe's flying-bomb development, took on a higher priority in the armaments industry.<sup>9</sup> The far-reaching plans that Hitler and a number of armaments experts and military leaders had for producing and using the A-4 long-range rocket (the later V-2) being developed at the army research establishment at Peenemünde, and the Fieseler 103 flying bomb (the future V-1),<sup>10</sup> were prompted by the devastating Allied bombing raids and a war situation that was going against the Reich.

The theme of 'revenge' loomed large in the Nazi propaganda campaign that went into full drive from the spring of 1943.<sup>11</sup> One initiative launched by Goebbels in the summer of that year, for the targeted spreading of rumours about the coming 'miracle weapons', was designed to stiffen the public's determination to see it through, and belief in final victory. The same purpose was behind a trip he made to western Germany on 18 June 1943.<sup>12</sup> After a big event in Düsseldorf the propaganda minister took part in a ceremony of remembrance for those who had died during the heavy raid on Wuppertal-Barmen, where over the graves of the victims he vowed revenge. The high point of his visit was a mass meeting in the evening of the same day in the Westfalenhalle in Dortmund; in a speech to some 20,000 participants, he sought to give courage to the population of the Ruhr, and in particular of Dortmund which had suffered badly from the raids, and to bolster their hope in the coming retaliation that he promised in visionary terms. 'I am welcomed with tumults of applause at the speaker's podium,' he recalled; 'Here it is not just a matter of attitude, but of the mood behind the attitude. The Dortmunders at the meeting summon up an image reminiscent of the best of the days of struggle. Never in the Westfalenhalle have I known a more tumultuous gathering.'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For statistics of the major raids see *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 410–11; Balke, *Luftkrieg in Europa*, pt. 2, 204–7. In 1943 there were in Britain at least 2,372 deaths from German air raids, *ibid.* 286.

<sup>9</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 623–4, 629–31, 747–8, vii. 420–6. See also Hölsken, *V-Waffen*; Schabel, *Die Illusion*.

<sup>10</sup> Neufeld, *Rocket and the Reich*, 170–8; Hellmold, *V 1*, 41–8 (Summary report Fi 103, 21 June 1943); *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 420–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 748–52, vii. 422–5.

<sup>12</sup> There is a full account of the tour in Blank, 'Dortmund', 34. Goebbels had already visited Essen in April that year.

<sup>13</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix. 497 (19 June 1943).

## 2. THE MIRAGE OF WAR-WINNING 'RETALIATION'

It was not only Goebbels who nursed the idea of an early counter-blow that would decide the outcome of the war in the Reich's favour. At funeral ceremonies for the Germans who had died in air raids, especially, the Nazi leaders announced the imminent retaliation. At the cemetery in Marl, for example, the Gauleiter for Northern Westphalia and state secretary, Alfred Meyer, told his listeners over the graves of those killed during an American attack on the town's artificial rubber factory on 22 June 1943: 'If we are not to be annihilated, we too have to conduct this war as a war of annihilation. You have to feel for yourself how it is when peaceful towns sink beneath rubble and ash and your wives and children are buried under the ruins. This has to come, and we know that the war of vengeance, too, will come. Then when the Führer strikes, Britain will know a terrible awakening.'<sup>14</sup>

The SD gauged the mood among the population, and the effect such promises had, somewhat differently. A report from the SD unit in Dortmund was already in early July 1943 saying:

In the past week the mood and attitude among the population of ruined cities in the Ruhr has not altered greatly. The question of when the counter-blow is finally going to be made is asked more insistently each day. From Dortmund, Bochum, and Hagen most of all there are reports that an ever growing nervousness can be seen among the population because no authority is able to offer anything like a satisfactory answer to the question. German propaganda—though particularly the speeches and articles by Reichsminister Goebbels—talking about the coming retaliation, are even being seen as a war of nerves by German propaganda against its own public.<sup>15</sup>

The 'retaliation miracle' being heralded by Goebbels and a great many other Nazi officials was indeed the proverbial last ray of hope to which, faced with the deteriorating war situation and worsening air raids, people were clinging. The reality of the bombing and absence of the looked-for retaliation were however engendering greater criticism of this wishful thinking. In June 1943 one official report commented, for instance: 'Tension about the retaliatory blows against England being forecast as imminent in press propaganda and in speeches by leading personalities has increased enormously everywhere, and is the subject of great discussion. Here and there, especially among the intelligentsia and in middle-class circles, some doubt is being expressed as to whether we are at all able to counter the terror raids.'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 'Gefallen an der Front der Heimat', in *Westfälischer Beobachter/Gladbecker Zeitung*, 29 June 1943, StadtA Gladbeck.

<sup>15</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 14, 5428 (reports from SD unit areas, 2 July 1943).

<sup>16</sup> Kreisleiter Essen to NSDAP Gau HQ Essen, 28 June 1943 *re* situation report on progress of emergency measures for dealing with bomb damage, 23 June 1943, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP, ii.

In the summer of 1943, too, the SD was hearing similar critical voices. It quoted, for instance, an engineer saying: 'Goebbels is saying that the day will come when revenge will be exacted, so it's not even in the foreseeable future. By then, it will all be over with us.'<sup>17</sup> Because of observations like this the propaganda minister himself, of all people, in December 1943 prohibited the use of the word 'retaliation' in the press.<sup>18</sup>

In the winter of 1943/4 the public's expectations had grown to such a pitch, and developed such a dynamic of their own, that one Nazi cell leader in a report on public mood had to record: 'Alongside these main topics of conversation [special rations for miners and problems with potato supplies] there is still the guessing game about retaliation. So much has been written about it in high places recently that most people are expecting a blow to be struck very soon. If retaliation were to be delayed another six months, it could bring about a disastrous drop in mood and attitude.'<sup>19</sup>

This report was by no means the exception;<sup>20</sup> it illustrates rather the great importance for domestic policy of the picture planted in the public's mind of retaliatory strikes that would decide the outcome of the war, and with them a supposed change in fortune thanks to 'miracle weapons'. The risks involved were however also enormous. Overblown hopes and expectations could not be fulfilled by the rockets and jet fighters that went into service for the first time in the summer and autumn of 1944.<sup>21</sup> 'For some time now V-2 have been launched against London. The news has made hardly any impression on the public. Far more notice is being taken of the refugees from the Rhineland. In Cologne life is no longer possible. No water, gas, or electricity, and no food,' was how one perceptive observer pointed up the contradiction between propaganda and reality on the home front.<sup>22</sup> In hindsight, the outpouring of propaganda about retaliation and the emphatic promises of miracle weapons can be seen to be no more than mirages meant to deceive, just a means of coping with the effects that the bombing and worsening course of the war were having on morale. The value of such propaganda tricks for the Party must not however be underestimated. They did in fact after 1943 govern the communication between the country's leadership and the public, and from then right up to the end of the war undoubtedly played an important role in stabilizing the home front. Even in the final weeks and days of the war, when the belief in miracles fed by the propaganda reached yet another high point, many of the *Volksgenossen* and lower ranks in the Party were still looking forward to the 'miracle of the final revenge' wreaked by the new weapons being developed in secret, the decision on the use of which Hitler had allegedly been reserving to himself.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiv. 5428 (report from SD unit in Dortmund, 2 July 1943).

<sup>18</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 424.

<sup>19</sup> Report from cell leader VI to Kreis HQ Oberhausen, 18 Dec. 1943 *re* public mood report for Cell VI, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP, ii.

<sup>20</sup> See also *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xv. 6108–9 (report of 9 Dec. 1943).

<sup>21</sup> Prime sources on this are Hölsken, *V-Waffen*; Schabel, *Die Illusion*.

<sup>22</sup> Römer diary (11 Oct. 1944), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>23</sup> Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 816–19.

## 3. PLACING BLAME

From 1943 onwards, Nazi air war propaganda became increasingly ideological: alongside the public's desire for revenge, use would also be made of placing blame and exploiting prejudices. American aircrew in particular were compared with gangsters and professional criminals, and there was open agitation against coloured troops. One article from the summer of 1943 illustrates the ideological and racist components of the propaganda: 'How can respect for other countries' cultural monuments be expected of people who have no culture of their own, and whose heroes are gang bosses and cheating negro boxers? It is the same breed of man that has come across the ocean from the USA, to bring culture to the countries of central Europe with their terror raids. The rabble, white or black, sits in Roosevelt's aircraft. This mob is devoid of culture, and will always be so . . . It is from this horde, plus the elite of the prison population, that US imperialism recruits its cudgel-wielding crack troops.'<sup>24</sup> In January 1944 Erhard Milch expressed the widespread opinion: 'The aircrew of the enemy air forces are recruited in the case of the British mainly from the nobility and other high-level circles. In contrast, the American flyers come almost exclusively from the lower classes. Every one of the pilots sent out on raids signs up for 30 missions; and for each of those he gets five to six hundred dollars.'<sup>25</sup>

It was to the Jews, most of all, that Nazi propaganda gave the responsibility for the air war. The press tried, for example, in May 1943 to persuade the public that the bombing of the Möhne dam had been the work of 'Jewry'. Already two days after the breaching of the dam accusations of this kind were being made in German newspapers, with headlines like 'Jews behind the bombing of the dams' and 'Attack on dams the work of Jews'.<sup>26</sup> This propaganda missed its target, however, as the public had serious doubts about the accusations. The SD reported in May 1943 that the question was instead being asked of why the Luftwaffe was not using 'similarly effective methods' against England.<sup>27</sup> On 20 December 1943 the Protestant bishop of Württemberg, Theophil Wurm, who had already in July 1940 been the first German bishop to speak out to the Reich minister of the interior against the 'euthanasia' being practised at Grafeneck hospital,<sup>28</sup> sent a letter to the head of the Reich chancellery, Hans Heinrich Lammers. Wurm said in it that the German people were 'often feeling the suffering they were having to endure from the enemy bombing raids was in retribution for what was being done to the Jews. The burning of houses and churches, the smashing and crashing at night under the

<sup>24</sup> *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 1 Aug. 1943.

<sup>25</sup> Proceedings of the conference for Gau and Kreis propaganda heads in Berlin, 10 Jan. 1944, StadtA Oberhausen, Akten der NSDAP 2, ii.

<sup>26</sup> *Bochumer Anzeiger*, 19 May 1943, StadtA Bochum, and *Westfälisches Tageblatt*, 19 May 1943, StadtA Hagen.

<sup>27</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xiii, 5290-1 (No. 386, 30 May 1943).

<sup>28</sup> Stöckle and Zacher, 'Euthanasie'.



bombs, the fleeing from shattered houses with a handful of belongings, the not knowing where to look for somewhere to run to, reminds the public most painfully of what the Jews had to put up with in earlier times.<sup>29</sup> Wurm looked on those killed in Germany in air raids, which at that time numbered around 100,000, as dying in expiation of the 'many sins' the German people had committed or had allowed without protest.<sup>30</sup> Lammers reacted indignantly to these words, and advised the bishop threateningly to show 'greater reticence in such matters'.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. MAINTAINING 'FIGHTING MORALE'

From 1943 the air raids also had a worsening effect on the discipline of the German workforce in the armaments industry. After heavy bombing, especially, important skilled workers in the arms factories were absent often for days on end. In Hamburg fourteen days after the severe raids in July–August 1943, for example, around 48 per cent of the industrial workforce were away from their benches, and the figure was still 9 per cent a month later.<sup>32</sup> For two weeks after a series of raids on Cologne the Ford works had only around a third of its workforce present; this was compensated for by increasing the working hours.<sup>33</sup> The problem of absenteeism after air raids continued to grow right up to the end of the war, in spite of punitive measures by the companies and by the Gestapo, which collaborated closely with the factory air defence system. The decamping of workers during air raids to 'safe' air-raid shelters off the factory premises forced the employers to take countermeasures. At the Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft (HASAG) factory in Leipzig, for instance, the factory fire brigade used fire hoses to prevent German workers from leaving the factory grounds.<sup>34</sup>

The intensification of the bombing after the summer of 1943 put the Gauleiters and RVKs especially under considerable pressure, as on the one hand the material damage was jeopardizing the whole production and supply base, and on the other the effects on morale among the population were presenting a threat to internal stability. On top of this there was the fear in the Party of possible revolutionary unrest of the kind there had been in November 1918 at the end of the First World War. On 9 November 1943, in his speech in Munich commemorating the 1923 march on the Feldherrnhalle, Hitler also spoke of the air war. He said that his sympathy went to the victims of the raids, referred to the coming retaliation, and described those who had been bombed out as

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 142. Theophil Wurm (1868–1953) was in 1951 on the committee that founded the 'Stillen Hilfe für Kriegsgefangene und Internierte' (silent aid to prisoners of war and internees), which among other activities interceded for convicted war criminals. Already before that he criticized the Nuremberg trials and the allegedly unjust de-nazification; on this see Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*, 762–3; Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik*, 146–53.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 142.

<sup>32</sup> USSBS Report No. 31, Area Studies Division Report, 9, NA, RG 243:31.

<sup>33</sup> Werner, 'Bleib übrig', 262.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 260.

the 'vanguard of vengeance'.<sup>35</sup> 'What took place in 1918,' he added, 'will not happen in Germany a second time.'<sup>36</sup>

Rousing appeals against the 'spirit of 1918' however did nothing to help quell the fears felt in wide circles of the Nazi leadership. In the Gau of Southern Westphalia, which was being hit particularly hard in the air raids, the Gau propaganda office even in May 1944 devoted a trans-regionally advertised exhibition in the Westfalenhalle in Dortmund, a building famous throughout the Reich, to the subject of the end of the First World War. After only a few days it fell victim to the RAF's bombs, a fate interpreted by the public as an ill omen.<sup>37</sup>

On 25 July 1944 a decree by Hitler removed responsibility for the Reich air defence league from the aviation ministry, and incorporated it in the Party as an autonomous organization.<sup>38</sup> Under this decree, the deployment and organizing of civilians for air defence was to be overseen by the Party's *Hoheits-träger*. The Nazi leaders confidently expected the 'self-protection squads' and NSDAP action teams to be more effective in fighting the fires started during air raids. At the same time the involvement of the Party would have a disciplinary side-effect, by keeping an eye on the *Volksgenossen*. The self-protection system that had been promoted in the first years of the war, and indeed still in 1943 included training the public in the use of fire-beaters, stirrup-pumps, and sand against the showers of stick and napalm incendiaries, was clearly no longer enough.<sup>39</sup> From early in 1945 'firebomb fighters' were offered cash bonuses of up to RM200 if they took part in fire-fighting and rescue work in public buildings.<sup>40</sup> Other measures taken on the home front were aimed at instilling the desired 'community feeling', 'determination to see it through', and 'fighting spirit' among the population. In the Ruhr and Westphalia, for example, the 'song of the Westphalian bomb-fighters' with its refrain 'Forward, you bomb-fighters, we are winning in spite of death and terror' was meant to foster the right attitude. The public was exhorted, in the press and by Nazi officials, to sing the song in chorus in the bunkers, shelters, and tunnels, and during the fire-fighting and rescue-digging.<sup>41</sup>

Keeping up fighting morale among the public however needed something more robust than press propaganda, songs, mass meetings, or Gau exhibitions; and most of the Gauleiters, and Goebbels too in particular, had recognized this. Obviously effective 'campaigns' by the Party divisions, for instance in attending to the provision of household goods and furnishings, building additional shelters and emergency housing, and evacuating women and children, were designed both to reflect well on the NSDAP in the propaganda and to

<sup>35</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2055.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Blank, 'Dortmund', 40.

<sup>38</sup> *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 103 02776–103 02780, 103 02781–103 02783.

<sup>39</sup> Some stick incendiaries were from 1942/3 fitted with explosive charges, which made extinguishing them something of a risk.

<sup>40</sup> Circular from ObdL re cash bonuses for employment after air raids, 2 Jan. 1945, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 02788.

<sup>41</sup> Beck, *Under the Bombs*, 114.

boost its role in 'underpinning the state'.<sup>42</sup> From early in 1944 the main topic of public concern throughout the Reich was the prospects for the Allied invasion, which was generally seen as promising a favourable turn in the fortunes of war for Germany and at times even pushing hopes for retaliation with the trumpeted new weapons into the background.<sup>43</sup> A diary entry illustrates this expectant mood on 6 June 1944, the day of the invasion itself: 'At lunch I heard from the waitress that the invasion in the west is in full swing. I couldn't swallow for my excitement. So the day has come that we've been awaiting for years, the Big Battle the Führer says will end in the destruction of England has begun.'<sup>44</sup>

Right up to the start of the invasion, however, a further stepping-up of the enemy's air offensive brought specially heavy losses to the population from the bombing. By the end of May the USAAF's attacks on the four western German railway stations in Hamm, Schwerte, Münster, and Osnabrück alone had claimed more than 800 lives. Although in the first six months of 1944 RAF Bomber Command had concentrated a substantial part of its efforts on railway installations and military targets in northern France and Belgium,<sup>45</sup> there were still area bombing raids on large cities in Germany.<sup>46</sup> By the autumn of 1944 the bombing had increased further, so that no important region or major city in Germany had escaped attack. On 26/7 and 29/30 August 1944 Bomber Command carried out two heavy carpet bombing raids on Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia, bringing the air war deep into the provinces in eastern German that had thus far known only a handful of raids by Soviet bombers. Over 3,400 died in these raids, and the city centre of the East Prussian capital was devastated.<sup>47</sup>

Regions like Pomerania and Silesia, which up to 1943/4 had counted as 'not at risk of air raids' and were prime evacuation destinations for the KLV, now also came into the Allied bombers' sights. In southern Germany too, which served as reception areas for evacuees from the industrial areas of the Rhineland and Westphalia, the attacks intensified. Munich, for instance, had since the beginning of the war been raided repeatedly by RAF Bomber Command, most recently on the night of 24/5 April 1944.<sup>48</sup> In June the 8th US Air Force, together with the 15th USAAF, launched a series of heavy daylight raids on the Bavarian capital. On 13 June a prisoner in the nearby concentration camp at Dachau watched a formation of 15th USAAF bombers, which

<sup>42</sup> Covered in detail in Armin Nolzen's section of the present volume.

<sup>43</sup> See for example *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6563 (SD report on home affairs, 1 June 1944).

<sup>44</sup> Römer diary (6 June 1944), StadtA Hagen. On German preparations for and the course of the invasion see Vogel in *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 585–65.

<sup>45</sup> Mierzejewski, *Collapse*, 86–7; see also USSBS Report No. 200: The Effect of Strategic Bombing on German Transportation, 12, NA, RG 243:200.

<sup>46</sup> Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 491–515.

<sup>47</sup> Matern, *Ostpreußen*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Richardi, *Bomber über München*; Permooser, *Luftkrieg über München*.

had flown that day across the Alps, attacking Munich. In his diary he wrote: 'We had never seen so many planes in the sky, silver, shiny things, tiny and beautiful, looking like a child's toys. They flew over quite quietly . . . We counted 380 aircraft, but there may just as well have been 500 or a thousand of them, as the sun was dazzling . . . Towards the end of the bombing there was a screaming noise in the air, there were massive thuds, and one could see clouds of debris and smoke going up high. Everything trembled and shook, and you could feel the air pressure.'<sup>49</sup>

By the end of July 1944 the number of those killed in Munich in American air raids had risen to over 2,000, and the inner city and suburbs lay in ruins. The Allied air forces had by then long enjoyed almost total mastery of the air over Germany.<sup>50</sup> The strategic bombers of the 8th and 15th USAAF were protected on their missions by hundreds of escort fighters.<sup>51</sup> From August 1944 the RAF's four-engined night bombers were also making heavy daylight raids on German targets, likewise under wide-ranging fighter cover.<sup>52</sup> For the population in the most important German industrial areas, though increasingly in more rural regions as well, the air war became ever more a threat to which they were exposed with no protection and devoid of hope.

<sup>49</sup> Kupfer-Koberwitz, *Die Mächtigen*, ii. 190.

<sup>50</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 338.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 296–7.

<sup>52</sup> The British daylight raids from August 1944 are reviewed in Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*.

## VII. The 'Society in Disintegration', 1944/1945

### I. THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR

In the autumn of 1944 the Allied troops in the east, south, and west were advancing inexorably on the borders of the Reich. Linked with Operations MARKET and GARDEN in September 1944,<sup>1</sup> which were intended to prepare a thrust into the north-west of Germany and the Ruhr, there had already been heavy raids on transport and industry in the west and south-west of the country.<sup>2</sup> On 21 October 1944 Aachen was the first major German city to fall into Allied hands, and the 'fight to the end' put up there gave the Allies a foretaste of what they could well expect in the Reich's other big cities.<sup>3</sup> The hopes of some in the Allied military leadership for a collapse of the Nazi regime and an end to the war before Christmas that year were however dashed with the failure of MARKET-GARDEN in the face of strong German resistance around Arnhem, and of the costly battles to take Aachen.<sup>4</sup> The impression grew among the Allied targeting staffs that German war potential was far from having been weakened to the extent that had been generally thought after the successful invasion. It was also assumed that the German population was continuing to support the Nazi regime.<sup>5</sup>

Very often there were well over 2,000 Allied aircraft operating over Germany, heading for several targets at once.<sup>6</sup> Strategic raids by four-engined long-range bombers alternated with tactical missions by twin-engined machines and fighter-bombers. From September 1944 the towns and regions on the right bank of the Rhine were increasingly sheltering refugees and evacuees. The Allied advance towards the Rhine drove before it not only Wehrmacht units but a great many civilians, forced to head towards the German interior or doing so on their own initiative. 'You see a lot of refugees at the railway station and in the streets,' it was for instance noted in Dortmund that September. 'Some of them come from Aachen, Trier, or the Rhineland. On their backs they have heavy rucksacks homemade from blankets, they wear

<sup>1</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 660-7.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 348-57.

<sup>3</sup> See Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 148-57.

<sup>4</sup> On the 'collapse theory' see *ibid.* 103-5; Müller and Ueberschär, *Kriegsende*, doc. 23, 184.

<sup>5</sup> As early as May 1944 a report from the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEP) Air Staff had stressed that no signs could be seen of a negative mood in Germany. It was, rather, assumed that the public there held a predominantly positive view of the regime's aims and policies: 'Air Attacks on Germany', 27 May 1944, PRO, AIR 20/4829.

<sup>6</sup> See *Die geheimen Tagesberichte*, xii; Freemant, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*; Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*.

several layers of clothing, and have as much luggage as they can carry. They're probably not allowed more than that.<sup>7</sup>

Refugees—mainly women, children, and the elderly—made their way with handcarts, on horse-drawn wagons, or on foot, into areas not yet under immediate threat from the Allied troops. Behind the front, the evacuees and refugees suffered the strafing and bombing that from the autumn of 1944 was directed at small and medium-sized towns as well. Besides the physical and mental strain from the almost constant attacks from the air, the public was beset with further difficulties. The 'total war measures' put in place from August 1944, under Goebbels as Reich commissioner, were intended to mobilize the final reserves and resources of the home front.<sup>8</sup> 'If we lose the war, it means slavery for every German—and certain death for every Party member,'<sup>9</sup> was how one Kreisleiter saw matters.<sup>10</sup> In 1944/5 the population was faced with these war efforts by the Party and authorities in a variety of forms. Prime examples would be the 'combing-out' of the staff of armaments factories and the offices of the authorities, the ditch-digging work on the fortifications of the 'Eastern Wall' and 'Western Wall', and from October 1944 the *Volkssturm*.

The 'national community' *Volksgemeinschaft* changed in 1944/5 into a community in ruins and collapse. In March 1945 one white-collar civil servant summed up the result of this development: 'It's terrible how people have lost any feeling of togetherness. Where is the *Volksgemeinschaft* that was talked about so much? Everyone persists in thinking only of himself.'<sup>11</sup> The military collapse that was plainly approaching in every theatre of operations, and the loss of identity and lack of all prospects for the future, had profound effects on the public mind. While, as the war neared its end, the Party and Gestapo let all inhibitions on the home front drop and indulged in a frenzy of activity often aiming at annihilation, the bulk of the public in the particularly badly damaged cities resignedly awaited the arrival of the enemy troops.<sup>12</sup>

#### (a) *Air Raids, Every Day and Every Night*

In the closing phase of the war the Allied air forces concentrated on individual regions and operational hotspots.<sup>13</sup> Between October and December

<sup>7</sup> *Kriegschronik der Stadt* (12 Sept. 1944), Stadtarchiv Dortmund, coll. 424–51.

<sup>8</sup> On this see Rebutisch, *Führerstaat*, 516–18; Nolzen, *Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation*, 76–82.

<sup>9</sup> Conference of Kreis leaders in the Gau of Essen (August 1944), HStA Düsseldorf, RW 23–87.

<sup>10</sup> On this read Armin Nolzen in the present volume.

<sup>11</sup> Römer diary (23 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the British post-war report on the situation in Dortmund after the heavy raid on 12 Mar. 1945, 'The effects of air attacks on the city and district of Dortmund, 28 Aug. 1945', PRO, AIR 14/1522.

<sup>13</sup> See essentially Horst Boog in *Germany and the Second World War*, x (yet to be published).

1944, for example, RAF Bomber Command undertook a second battle of the Ruhr.<sup>14</sup> Operation HURRICANE I, carried out as a major effort by Bomber Command and the 8th USAAF, was directed at Duisburg and Cologne on 14 and 15 October 1944.<sup>15</sup> In the last two months of 1944 the strategic bomber fleets launched an air offensive against railway traffic and inland shipping in northern, western, and southern Germany.<sup>16</sup> In the autumn of that year the industrial area of the Rhineland and Westphalia, which occupied a permanent place right at the top of the Allied target list, suffered constant attacks by day and night. On 28 October one Cologne inhabitant noted, after a heavy British daylight raid by more than 700 four-engined bombers: 'The last warning brought us perhaps the heaviest raid we have ever had. Almost every part of the city has been hit, but especially Mülheim. A train full of refugees in the station was hit by three bombs, and the victims there numbered in the hundreds.'<sup>17</sup>

In Hamm, in Westphalia, it was not only rail traffic in Europe's biggest marshalling yard that came to a standstill—the city too was hit severely, up to December 1944, by ten American daytime attacks and one British raid.<sup>18</sup> In Essen the famous Krupp works lay largely silent after a 'double whammy' by more than 1,800 RAF bombers on 23/4 and 25 October, in which over 1,600 were killed. Other industrial regions and centres of population outside western Germany did not however escape: already on the night of 12 September a relatively small contingent of 226 Lancaster bombers had attacked Darmstadt, a town of around 120,000 inhabitants in the south of Hesse that had up to then been largely spared.<sup>19</sup> On that night the whole of the town centre was destroyed in a firestorm, and at least 8,400 inhabitants died.<sup>20</sup> On the following night around 200 Lancasters carried out a devastating attack on Stuttgart. There was such a concentrated hail of bombs into the basin in which the Schwabian capital city lies that the numerous incendiaries started an enclosed area conflagration that it became impossible for the fire crews to fight. More than 900 inhabitants did not survive this raid. On 12/13 September 1944 Stuttgart's inner city, already badly hit in earlier attacks, ceased to exist.<sup>21</sup> 'We had to climb over the dead to get away from the sea of fire,' one Stuttgart

<sup>14</sup> Richards, *Hardest Victory*, 258–9.

<sup>15</sup> Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, iv. 174–6.

<sup>16</sup> Mierzejewski, *Collapse*, 123; Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, iii. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Pettenberg, *Starke Verbände*, 312.

<sup>18</sup> See USSBS Report No. 67: Hamm, locomotive shops and bridges, October 1945, PRO, AIR 48/137.

<sup>19</sup> Within Bomber Command, 5 Bomber Group was a special unit, which succeeded by using a particular bombing technique (fan-pattern bombing) to create devastating area fires in the cities being raided, see Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, 312–13; Lawrence, No. 5 *Bomber Group*.

<sup>20</sup> USSBS-Report No. 37, Area Studies Division: A detailed study of the effects of area bombing on Darmstadt, Germany, NA, RG 243:37; Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 580–1; Engels, *Darmstadt*; Hildebrandt and Franz, *Die Zerstörung Darmstadts*; Schmidt, *Die Brandnacht*. The number of victims in Darmstadt is put at up to 12,000.

<sup>21</sup> Bardua, *Stuttgart*, 124–35.



woman recalls. 'As I turned into the Falkertstraße, I couldn't help thinking "We've been living through the Day of Judgement."' <sup>22</sup>

After a 'fan-pattern raid' by more than 220 aircraft of 6 Bomber Group on Braunschweig in the evening of 15 October 1944 the whole of the inner city looked like a sea of flames, and it was only with the greatest of difficulty that some 23,000 people could be rescued from the eight giant bunkers. At least 5,560 inhabitants died, and over 80,000 were bombed out and on the street. 'It was one great maelstrom of fire, as magnificent to behold as hideous in its effect! You thought a hurricane-like storm had broken out at that very moment, for the enemy had set our old town on fire from one end to the other,' one of the survivors wrote immediately after the Braunschweig raid. <sup>23</sup>

The raid on Freiburg im Breisgau on 27/8 November 1944 claimed more than 2,000 lives in the town huddling beneath its famous minster. The old town, world renowned for its timbered buildings, was almost totally consumed by the flames. <sup>24</sup> During the night of 4/5 December over 280 Lancasters began the first big raid since the start of the war on Heilbronn and its population of 77,000. More than 1,200 tonnes of incendiaries and HEs fell on the historic heart of the town on the banks of the Neckar; the extensive area conflagration that raged through Heilbronn's narrow streets brought death to over 7,000 of its inhabitants. <sup>25</sup> In 1944/5 the air war held almost all regions of the Reich in its grasp, especially those in the west, and in its effects can be often be likened only to great natural disasters. The number of dead and the extent of the destruction rose in quick succession.

Goebbels kept close watch on the new ratcheting up of the air war in the winter of 1944/5. On 2 November 1944 he noted, after reading the report of a tour of inspection by Theodor Ellgering, the secretary of the ILA, that 'the cities of Cologne, Duisburg, and probably Essen as well . . . can be regarded as almost totally destroyed. In Duisburg the port has been almost completely annihilated. During the bombing nearly all that remained of our Rhine fleet was sunk . . . We must look at how the air war is going to develop further with the greatest concern.' <sup>26</sup> Two weeks later he had to record that in Gelsenkirchen, Münster, Bochum, and Bielefeld, too, things looked 'just as dire', and that in the opinion of the ILA these cities could also be regarded as 'very largely' destroyed. <sup>27</sup> On 12 December 1944 Goebbels made his last visit to the bombed area of the Ruhr; he wanted to get an on-the-spot picture of the situation that had been described to him as catastrophic. <sup>28</sup> In the bunker command post of Albert Hoffmann, the Gauleiter and RVK for Southern Westphalia whom he held in great respect, on the Hakortberg near Wetter-on-Ruhr

<sup>22</sup> Bardua, *Stuttgart*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> *Braunschweig im Bombenkrieg*, pt. 2, 51 (The Gerloff Reports).

<sup>24</sup> Ueberschär, *Freiburg*, 204.

<sup>26</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 138 (2 Nov. 1944).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 407 (13 Dec. 1944).

<sup>25</sup> Bläsi and Schrenk, *Heilbronn 1944/45*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 218 (16 Nov. 1944).

Goebbels witnessed in the early afternoon a British raid on the nearby town of Witten: 'We watch from high above how the town is blazing fiercely . . . a large industrial town ablaze from end to end is a hideous sight, and one would like to shut one's eyes when faced with so much misery,' he told his diary.<sup>29</sup> After driving through the ruins of Witten he went to see the almost totally destroyed Gau capital of Bochum: 'The city looks like a pile of rubble; there is hardly an undamaged house to be seen . . . you see only piles of stones and workers creeping back to their cellars through the rain, twilight, and mist.'<sup>30</sup>

As 1944 turned into 1945 the situation Goebbels had met in Bochum was quite typical of other large industrial cities in Germany. Three days after Goebbels's visit the Ardennes offensive began.<sup>31</sup> 'For days there's been the thunderous sound of guns from the front, especially at night,' it was noted in the ruins of the Ruhr two days after the 'counter-offensive' began.<sup>32</sup> A headline in the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* on 18 December 1944 read: 'Front-line and home front bound inextricably in community forged by fate', and on the home front acclaimed the German soldiers fighting not all that far from Cologne: 'For the past five weeks the people of our Gau (Cologne-Aachen) have been living under threats from the enemy leaflets that are showered down every day from the sky . . . On top of the mental strain engendered by this enemy said to be 20 times stronger, there is the unending terror from an air offensive of a kind never before concentrated in such a small area.'<sup>33</sup> The article tried to persuade the public that the Ardennes offensive had brought about a turning point in the war, and that the worst of the bombing was over. To the construct of a 'national community'—the *Volksgemeinschaft*—was added on the home front as the war drew to its close that of a 'community forged by fate'—a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, of the kind had already been promoted in propaganda in June 1943 in relation to the disastrous effects of a raid in Wuppertal.<sup>34</sup>

### (b) Severe Damage to Industry and Transport

From the autumn of 1944, in the major industrial regions, the Allied bombing brought restrictions on both rail, road, and waterborne transport and industrial production; the latter was particularly affected by its indirect effects (power cuts, raw materials supplies, and non-delivery of component

<sup>29</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 409 (13 Dec. 1944). This was a radar-guided daylight raid by 140 four-engined Lancasters, escorted by 80 P-51 fighters, between 1400h and 1420h on the Ruhrstahl AG works, though this hit mostly the centre of Witten and its environs together with parts of Bochum and Castrop-Rauxel. In Witten alone this first heavy raid on the town claimed more than 330 lives.

<sup>30</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiv. 409 (13 Dec. 1944).

<sup>31</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 678–97.

<sup>32</sup> War diary of the civil defence police in Hagen, iii (18 Dec. 1944), StadtA Hagen, coll. Ha 1, 12478.

<sup>33</sup> *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 18 Dec. 1944.

<sup>34</sup> *General-Anzeiger der Stadt Wuppertal*, 27 June 1943, StadtA Wuppertal.

parts). The industrial strength on the home front needed to back up the 'fighting front' was in danger of being lost. In the view of Speer, the minister for armaments and war production (RMfRuK), the western part of the Reich now held a key role in the German war effort.<sup>35</sup> In his inspection tour report on 'The West' for Hitler Speer had already in September 1944 come to the conclusion that 'a continuation of the war would not be possible without the industrial area of the Rhineland and Westphalia'.<sup>36</sup> Only two months later the situation in western Germany had deteriorated so much that Speer's words took on a special relevance. He therefore presented, on 11 November, his Ruhr memorandum in which he described the development to Hitler in urgent terms, setting out the consequences a total loss of this region would have on the war situation.<sup>37</sup> He ended his memorandum with these emotional words: 'In no case must we tire. We shall make every effort to win this battle for the Ruhr that will be decisive for the fate of our Reich.'<sup>38</sup>

After a further visit to the Rhineland and Westphalia Speer had to recognize that the ceaseless bombing was putting clear limits on his initial optimism. In his report on the tour (submitted to Hitler) he did note an unflagging determination among the population—'in spite of the constant heavy air raids, in spite of the hours of air-raid warnings by day and night, in spite of the problems with food and transport, in spite of the lack of water and electricity';<sup>39</sup> given the enormous damage done by the raids, and its lasting consequences, however, he could only hope for a miracle. Speer then turned to the 'miracle weapons', and urged an immediate concentrated use of the new Me 163 rocket-propelled fighter and the Me 262 jet fighter over this region, in particular to shoot down the Allied Pathfinder aircraft but also 'to boost the low morale of the population, who feel themselves defenceless'. He further asked Hitler to make available 100,000 to 150,000 workers for clearing away the bomb damage to railway yards and industrial works in west German cities. To deal with the crisis he prevailed on Hitler to appoint the influential industrialist Albert Vögler as his general plenipotentiary for the Rhineland and Ruhr ('armaments plenipotentiary, Rhine-Ruhr'). Vögler also took on Speer's position as chief of the 'Ruhr Staff', which gave him wide-ranging authority and total power in the region.<sup>40</sup> This made the industrial region of the Rhineland and Westphalia a model for other regions of the Reich; in February and March 1945 armaments

<sup>35</sup> Mierzejewski, *Collapse*, 130–9.

<sup>36</sup> App. to Speer's inspection tour report of 15 Sept. 1944, BA, R 3/1539.

<sup>37</sup> Ruhr memorandum of 11 Nov. 1944, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 00128–108 00142.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Report of 23 Nov. 1944 on the visit to the Rhineland and Ruhr from 15 to 23 Nov. 1944, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 00206–108 00230.

<sup>40</sup> Janssen, *Das Ministerium Speer*, 285; Eichholtz, *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft*, iii. 65. For a biography of Vögler see Kohl, *Die Präsidenten der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft*. Originally the Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia, Albert Hoffmann, was intended to be the 'armaments plenipotentiary', but this was turned down by Hitler for fear of disputes arising with the other Gauleiters in western Germany.

plenipotentiaries were appointed in southern and northern Germany as well.<sup>41</sup> With the 'Ruhr aid campaign' at the end of the year 1944/5 the Ruhr Staff led by Vögler attempted to achieve a vestige of production in the bomb-damaged hydration and benzol plants. Up to the end of January 1945 these still delivered around 9.8 million litres of fuel for 'use at the front' in Army Group B's area, though the impending collapse was plainer than ever to see. It was most of all the blocking of the important 'coal gateways'—marshalling yards that handled the transport of coal to other regions—on the periphery of the Rhineland-Westphalia industrial area that in 1944/5 had disastrous effects.<sup>42</sup> This hit not only the armaments industry and Reichsbahn, but also and to an increased extent the civilian population, left without coal for their domestic fires.<sup>43</sup> Once the Soviet troops had taken the coalfields of Upper Silesia in January 1945, the crises in the coal supply became a great deal worse. As the only coalfield still accessible, the Ruhr was supposed to provide coal and coke to the whole of the Reich (those parts of it not yet occupied by the Allied armies). Given the bomb damage, losses in output, and transport difficulties such an attempt was doomed from the outset.<sup>44</sup>

(c) *Lynch Law against Allied Aircrew*

More and more in the final phase of the war, as a result of the hate propaganda that set the tone of the German press, acts of violence were perpetrated against Allied aircrew.<sup>45</sup> As early as May 1943 Friedrich Hildebrandt, Gauleiter and defence commissioner in Mecklenburg, told the Party chancellery that the public would be happy to see 'every Britisher who had left his plane alive' shot at once.<sup>46</sup> As chief of the German police Hitler had in August 1943 pointed out that it was not the job of the police to get mixed up in any confrontation between the public and British or American 'terrorist aircrew' who had baled out.<sup>47</sup> In May 1944, under the headline 'A word about the enemy terror from the air', Goebbels raised the question of whether, given the Allies' 'determination to annihilate', such bomber crews could be recognized as having

<sup>41</sup> Deployment of an armaments plenipotentiary 'North-West' in Hamburg, 12 Mar. 1945, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 00036; deployment of armaments plenipotentiaries 'South-West' in Heidelberg, 'Oder-Moldau' in Prague, and 'Danube-Drau' in Kapfenberg, 5 Feb. 1945, *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 00631-2.

<sup>42</sup> Mierzejewski, *Collapse*, 159-61, 172.

<sup>43</sup> USSBS Report No. 3: The Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy, 92-99, 136, NA, RG 243:3.

<sup>44</sup> Speer too had recognized this, and on 30 Jan. 1945 in his report on 'the armaments situation February-March 1945' told Hitler of the conclusions to be drawn, see *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 108 00146-108 00156.

<sup>45</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 334-6; Schnatz, 'Lynchmorde'; Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 366-9; Blank, '... der Volksempörung nicht zu entziehen', 264-7.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted from Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 366. Already in April 1942 the Gauleiter had nourished the wish to kill RAF flyers. In 1947 Hildebrandt was condemned to death at Dachau and executed for his participation or complicity in the murder of 15 American aircrew near Schwerin on 21 May 1944, NA, RG 153 JAG, Case No. 12-1368, 12-1369; IMT, vi. 407-8.

<sup>47</sup> Himmler's order of 10 Aug. 1943 (copy), PRO, WO 235/193. See also *Akten der Partei-Kanzlei*, 102 00195, here with the cover letter informing Bormann.

protection under international law at all.<sup>48</sup> Martin Bormann, head of the Party chancellery, in a circular to the Gauleiters on 30 May 1944 (to be passed on verbally to Kreisleiters), noted that aircrew of the Allied air forces who had baled out or made an emergency landing were repeatedly being lynched on the spot. He went on to confirm that no police or penal measures were to be taken against the *Volksgegnossen* involved.<sup>49</sup> After the escape of fifty-eight British airmen from the Stalag Luft III POW camp near the town of Sagan in Lower Silesia, Gestapo officials on Himmler's orders murdered all those recaptured for 'resisting'.<sup>50</sup> Yet among some of the population, too, there was evidently a wish to kill captured Allied airmen. In February 1944 the SD recorded at length the sadistic imaginings of a bombed-out air-raid victim who wanted enemy pilots to be thrown onto the burning ruins so as to enjoy watching their agony.<sup>51</sup> Other *Volksgegnossen* wanted the British to be 'smoked out like dogs' with gas, a wish that after one devastating RAF raid in May 1944 was even to be seen written on the wall of a bombed apartment block in Wuppertal: 'God strike England—Gas against England!'<sup>52</sup>

The best-known case of lynching in which the population were involved occurred on 26 August 1944 in Rüsselsheim, where seven American airmen were killed.<sup>53</sup> After a heavy raid on Essen on 13 December 1944 an infuriated crowd murdered three members of an RAF bomber crew.<sup>54</sup> On 24 March 1944 there were at least four lynchings in Bochum, illustrating the brutal form such happenings took.<sup>55</sup> The first case was of a British airman who had landed by parachute on a field near Bochum, where he was first assaulted by one of the flak troops with a rifle butt. He fell to the ground, where a crowd gathered around him. The members of the public attacked the airman, who was holding his hands up no doubt to show that he was not armed and had surrendered, hitting and kicking him. A man who was later identified at the trial before the British military tribunal in Bochum as the real ringleader urged the crowd on with, among others, the words 'Kill him!' After the airman had already been badly injured by the many blows and kicks, attempts were made to shoot him, first with a rifle and then with a pistol. Because both of these jammed, the ring-leader found a heavy hammer and dragged the victim down a hill, where he was further viciously attacked by this man and another person. Finally he was killed by several blows with the hammer. A policeman who was present and watching made no attempt to save the prisoner of war's life. A number of persons had

<sup>48</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, Berlin edition, 28 May 1944.

<sup>49</sup> Circular from Party chancellery of 30 May 1944 (copy), PRO, WO 235/193.

<sup>50</sup> Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals, xi. 31–52; see also *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 336.

<sup>51</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvi. 6302 (SD report on home affairs, 7 Feb. 1944).

<sup>52</sup> A photograph of this was taken by the Bochum civil defence police after the raid on the Barmen district on 29/30 May 1945. It can be found in a photograph album with pictures of various activities of the Bochum fire brigade from 1942 to 1944, StadtA Bochum.

<sup>53</sup> Neliba, *Lynchjustiz*.

<sup>54</sup> Essen West case, PRO, WO 235/57–100; Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals, i. 88–92.

<sup>55</sup> Bochum case 1–4, PRO, WO 235/153, 130, together with WO 309/1505–13. Also quoted in what follows.

however pointed out to the perpetrator that the end of the war was imminent, with the possibility of his action being punished by the Allies. The other three RAF aircrew were on the same day, with the connivance of a Nazi local group leader, tortured and then shot.<sup>56</sup> For one German worker these four lynchings at Bochum had a fatal consequence. Drinking with his mates that evening, a member of a factory fire brigade argued strongly against the ill treatment of Allied aircrew; as a result of denunciation by one of his 'colleagues' he was arrested that night by the Gestapo and while being transported to police cells was shot 'while trying to escape'.<sup>57</sup> This case shows that Germans who spoke out against lynch law could even become victims of their own 'national comrades'. While lynching of Allied airmen was not prosecuted by the German courts and police, Germans who treated shot-down aircrew humanely and with consideration could expect to be charged with 'prohibited contact with prisoners of war'. One *Landwacht* constable from Siegen, for example, was in November 1943 sentenced to fifteen months in prison by the special court in Hagen: after a bombing raid on the Ruhr he had invited a shot-down American pilot to eat lunch with his family.<sup>58</sup> Two farmers from Dorsten were committed to a 'labour camp' for several weeks by the Gestapo for having given coffee and bread to two Allied airmen.<sup>59</sup>

A month prior to the lynchings in Bochum on 25 February 1945 the Westfalen-Süd RVK and Gauleiter Hoffmann had issued an 'order on airmen' which, contrary to the rules of war, ran: 'All fighter-bombers pilots who are shot down are on principle not to be protected from the indignation of the people. I expect from all police offices that they will not lend their protection to these gangster types. Authorities acting contrary to popular feelings will be held to account by me. This attitude of mine is to be transmitted without delay to all members of the police and gendarmerie.'<sup>60</sup> The order was passed on to the Party, the *Volkssturm*, and the authorities in the Gau, and published as administrative information.<sup>61</sup> The order bears witness to the lynching policy fostered by Goebbels and other representatives of the Nazi regime among the middle-ranking leadership; he had, indeed, helped to make it harsher still, as punishment was threatened for correct treatment in accordance with the international laws of war.

Exactly how many of these lynchings there were is not known. Cautious estimates, based on the British and American military tribunal cases between 1945 and 1949, suggest that at least 350 murders of Allied aircrew are possible (equivalent to about 1 per cent of those who ended up as prisoners of war in Germany). At Dachau alone the American courts tried about 200 'aircrew cases', and there were more or less the same number in the British zone of occupation.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> PRO, WO 235/205, WO 309/1055.

<sup>57</sup> *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*, iv. 448–63, 484–90.

<sup>58</sup> Niermann, *Strafjustiz*, 35.

<sup>59</sup> Blank, '... der Volksempörung nicht zu entziehen', 273.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 265, also on the history of the transmission of this order.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 285–9.

<sup>62</sup> Stiepani, 'Die Dachauer Prozesse', 229; Sigel, *Im Interesse der Gerechtigkeit*, 8–9, 113–15; Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 84–5.



## 2. THE BOMBING WAR DRAWS TO ITS CLOSE

*(a) Unceasing Attacks and Air-Raid Warnings*

As everyday life disintegrated, the words 'home front' became a grim reality, affecting to an equal degree not only the German *Volksgemeinschaft* but in addition the hundreds of thousands of foreign forced labourers and prisoners of war who were also struggling to survive in the shattered cities.<sup>63</sup> One diary entry summed up the situation: 'The new year began like the old one ended. That is to say, one air-raid warning follows on the heels of the other. The attacks are becoming even fiercer. We soon shan't know where to turn.'<sup>64</sup> The constant day and night bombing by the strategic air forces, the continuous low-level strafing and attacks by fighter-bombers, and the carpet bombing by twin-engined tactical middle-range bombers across the Reich left the population and ground defences hardly any respite. In February and March 1945 the western Allies were on the Rhine, in the east Silesia and East Prussia had been lost to the Red Army and Soviet troops were now marching towards Berlin, while American plans to take the imaginary 'Alpine redoubt' were threatening southern Germany.<sup>65</sup>

The finale of the bombing war was being played out. And the effects it was having put everything that had happened before in the shade. Many of the Allied raids were directed at cities and regions that in the last months of the war had taken in a great many refugees and evacuees,<sup>66</sup> including the ports in north-eastern Germany that had had to accommodate the bulk of the refugees from East Prussia, Saxony that had served as a reception area for those from Lower and Upper Silesia, and Westphalia that took in others from the left bank of the Rhine. After a night raid on Nuremberg on 2 January 1945 that claimed over 1,790 lives,<sup>67</sup> the *Regierungspräsident* in Ansbach commented: 'The deep advances made by the Bolshevik winter offensive into what had always been German territory—indeed to within 100 km of Berlin—have . . . cast large parts of the public into deep despondency of a kind never seen before . . . This mood of depression was in Franconia deepened still further by the terror raid on 2 January 1945 on Nuremberg, the home city of the Party rallies.'<sup>68</sup> Representative of many other cities, this report bears testimony to the fact that towards the end of the war the good mood and attitude in large parts of the population, maintained by the Nazi leadership since 1943 often only by dint of propaganda and a great many other measures, had sunk to rock bottom.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> On the final phase of the war see Müller and Ueberschär, *Kriegsende*; Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*; *Kriegsende 1945 in Deutschland*.

<sup>64</sup> Römer diary (7 Feb. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>65</sup> Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 937–42.

<sup>66</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 210–14.

<sup>67</sup> Schramm, *Bomben auf Nürnberg*, 145.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 163, report on public mood by the *Regierungspräsident* in Ansbach, 8 Feb. 1945.

<sup>69</sup> *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 34–6; Henke, *Amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands*, 795–861; Steinert, *Hitler's War*, 306–28.



The heavy raid on Magdeburg on 16 January 1945 by over 300 RAF four-engined bombers produced a large area conflagration; around 4,000 lost their lives in the firestorm that raged through the city centre. A third of the city's entire built-up area was totally destroyed.<sup>70</sup> The following night a further 72 Mosquitoes attacked Magdeburg again, dropping landmines, HE, and target-marker bombs to hinder the work of the fire-fighting and salvage teams.<sup>71</sup> Saturation raids of this kind, which became numerous towards the end of the war, were aimed at paralysing the fire, civil defence, administration, and air defence services. A greater use of delayed-action bombs was likewise designed to hamper the work of the firefighters and salvage workers for hours and days after a raid was over. These 'unexploded bombs', like the saturation raids, had a specially severe effect on public morale. For the population the bombing war between February and April 1945 was often an apocalyptic experience, one that was graven deep into memories and perceptions of the war. Berlin, Dresden, Pforzheim, Würzburg, and Swinemünde too became, like many other small and large cities across the Reich, symbols of an Allied conduct of the air war aiming to achieve its military and strategic aims by using massive force. The civilian population was being defined as part of a political system that had to be destroyed in order to bring the war to a successful conclusion.

(b) *Heavy Raids on Berlin*

In the spring of 1945 the German capital again became the focus of the Allied air war. A woman in Braunschweig recorded in her diary: 'The planes are over Berlin every day, sometimes twice a day. The poor, poor people, how do they stand such suffering. Everyone is totally worn out.'<sup>72</sup> Already in the autumn of 1943 a 'Light Night Striking Force' had been formed within 8 Bomber Group, Bomber Command's Pathfinder force.<sup>73</sup> Equipped with the fast and high-altitude Mosquitoes, built largely of wood, this unit began in 1943/4 to carry out constant 'nuisance raids' on Berlin. The Mosquitoes were not a regular feature of the bombing war for the citizens of Berlin alone—their radius of action stretched over the whole of the Reich. As small formations or lone aircraft they often carried out their nuisance raids over hours on end, frequently making several raids in one night. From altitudes that at more than 10,000 metres were out of range of the heavy flak guns, the Mosquitoes dropped 1.8-tonne landmines and high-explosive bombs.<sup>74</sup>

The repeated air-raid warnings and spoof indications of an impending large-scale attack given by dropping target-markers were an irritant to the German

<sup>70</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 396; Wille, *Der Himmel brennt*.

<sup>71</sup> Bomber Command Report of Night Operations, 17/18 Feb. 1945, PRO, AIR 14/3412.

<sup>72</sup> Diary entry by Luise Kassel, 9 Mar. 1945, quoted from *Braunschweig im Bombenkrieg*, 63.

<sup>73</sup> Richards, *Hardest Victory*, 184.

<sup>74</sup> A Mosquito could carry four 226-kg HEs or a landmine of up to 1,812 kg ('block busters'). The number of aircraft taking part varied from a single machine up to formations of about 100 Mosquitoes, of the kind that flew against Berlin and other targets in the winter of 1944/5 and spring of 1945.

night fighters, and lured them away from the real targets. For the population, on the other hand, the repeated air-raid warnings at night meant sleeplessness that put them under both physical and mental strain. Like the mosquitoes of the insect kingdom, their mechanical namesakes were a nightly plague for the inhabitants and the air defence forces of the Reich's capital and many other German cities. Goebbels noted in March 1945:

'Day by day these Mosquito raids are getting heavier and causing more harm. Most of all we are having enormous damage done to our transport system in Berlin.'<sup>75</sup> On 3 February 1945 the 8th US Air Force had a massive blow prepared for the German capital. One Berliner confided to his diary:

Daylight raid from 1030h to 1240h. The formations of enemy bombers approached Berlin from the south-west and south, in a clear sky and sunny weather. We saw the white vapour trails in the blue sky very high up, and could see closed-up formations flying towards the centre of the city. Then we heard, behind the metre-thick walls of our bunker and for more than an hour, nothing but the awful rumbling thunder of the carpet of falling bombs, with the lights flickering and sometimes almost going out when a power cable was hit . . . When we left the bunker the sun had disappeared, the sky darkened with clouds. Fed by numberless small and big fires, a vast sea of smoke hung over the whole of the inner city, with two big silver-edged peaks sticking out of it towards the sky like a menacing mountain range . . . In the Neuburgerstraße, near the Hallesches Tor, the girls' trades school had been hit; hundreds of girls had been sheltering in the cellar. Later on the parents were standing in front of the shattered bodies, mangled and stripped naked by the blast, no longer able to recognize their own daughters.<sup>76</sup>

Though the raid on 3 February by more than 1,000 American bombers did have two marshalling yards in the Reich capital as its target, it hit most of all the inner city. More than 100,000 were bombed out of their homes, and the water and electricity supplies were cut off for a long time. For the Berliners this was the costliest raid of the whole war—by 23 February 1945 the police had registered 2,893 dead.<sup>77</sup> The dead included Ronald Freisler, the president of the people's court and a prominent 'hanging judge' in the Nazi justice system. The 3 February daylight raid on Berlin was however to be surpassed by a two-day raid by the 8th USAAF on Nuremberg. Screened by hundreds of escort fighters, a total of more than 2,000 four-engined aircraft attacked the 'city of the Party rallies' on 20 and 21 February. Together with Operation CLARION against smaller and medium-sized rail junctions throughout the Reich carried out immediately before it, this two-day raid was aimed at

<sup>75</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv. 502 (14 Mar. 1945).

<sup>76</sup> Diary of Karl Deutmann (3 Feb. 1945), Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, in *LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online* (last accessed by author 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives\\_gedaechtnis/008/index.html](http://www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives_gedaechtnis/008/index.html).

<sup>77</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 400. See also Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv. 309 (5 Feb. 1945). Goebbels was already talking of 2,000 to 3,000 deaths, an estimate that was later to prove relatively accurate.

bringing about 'transport chaos' in southern Germany.<sup>78</sup> Almost 5,000 tonnes of HE and incendiary bombs caused enormous devastation in Nuremberg.<sup>79</sup> At least 1,356 died, more than 1,200 were injured, and around 35,000 were bombed out and had to be evacuated from the city. The water and electricity supply networks were so badly disrupted by deep-penetration HE bombs that by the end of March 1945 only a small part of them had been repaired.<sup>80</sup>

(c) *An Indiscriminate Bombing War*

In the closing phase of the war the American air raids, which were primarily targeted at railway installations and industrial plant, were in their effects on the population often just as serious and burdensome as the British area bombing. This is borne out by the picture painted in February 1945 by a foreman working in the south of the Ruhr:

As I went from our cellar to the works, I could see a hideous pall of smoke drifting over the city. It was a dreadful journey. Everything burning, ripped apart, shattered. The big bridge at the goods-wagon yard was lying on the tracks. Dead people and horses lying in the street, some of them hideously maimed. Desperate people, smothered in muck and dust, some of them with ghastly wounds, wandering about, being led away, or still looking for how to get away. In the Protestant kindergarten the nuns and children were lying dead and horribly injured. I was there, in the collapsed cellar; I couldn't stand the sight of the poor children, and wanted to weep with anger.

Deeply shocked by what he had seen, the man stood around with a crowd of people in the street and discussed the way the war was going: 'We're helpless before all the horror. Nonetheless the war is being won, we hear so every day on the radio and in the papers. I want that to be so with all my heart, yet 90 per cent of the public don't believe it any more.'<sup>81</sup> Three weeks later he experienced an attack by fighter-bombers: 'They came on us flying low, with their engines screaming. They were firing from all barrels, and dropping bombs on the railway yard. We stood by the bunker, watching the planes circling round . . . Then they came sweeping close above our roofs, a deafening noise filling the air. Columns of smoke rise into the sky everywhere, from tanker wagons that have been hit, and they dive down again and again.'<sup>82</sup> There was, the war-hardened foreman (who by this time was already a member of the *Volkssturm*) had matter-of-factly to admit, no longer any protection against these fighter-bombers.

It was not however the Reich's capital and the cities in western German, nor Nuremberg and Munich, that in February 1945 were hit by the full, concentrated power of the bombing war and turned into a blazing torch, but Dresden. The Gau capital of Saxony, dubbed 'Florence on the Elbe', was

<sup>78</sup> Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 443-4.

<sup>79</sup> Schramm, *Bomben auf Nürnberg*, 169-78.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 174-5.

<sup>81</sup> Römer diary (1 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen. The entry relates to a raid by 151 B-17s of the 8th USAAF on the Hagen-Eckesey marshalling yard on 28 Feb. 1945, which claimed more than 420 lives.

<sup>82</sup> Römer diary (25 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

famous round the world as the baroque jewel of the kings of Saxony. The double strike on Dresden was delivered by RAF bombers (in two, combined operations) during the night of 13/14 February 1945, and by two American bomber formations on the next two days. Together with Operation GOMORRAH against Hamburg in the summer of 1943, the bombing of Dresden counts as one of the most devastating air attacks carried out by the Allies in the European theatre of operations.<sup>83</sup> Some 25,000 persons were killed,<sup>84</sup> and the historic Old Town almost entirely destroyed. 'Dresden was a beautiful city,' read one diary entry from 19 February 1945, 'and it is hard to get used to the idea that now Dresden too no longer exists.'<sup>85</sup> In a letter a month later an inhabitant of the city relates his experiences and impressions on the night of the raid:

. . . we were hardly in the cellar when the descent into Hell began . . . incendiaries, phosphorus, HEs, landmines—in short, everything that human-and-bestial science and its henchman technology can devise—crashed down upon us . . . Because of its dense network of narrow streets, our beautiful Dresden was a single lake of flame. The night-time sky was glowing blood red . . . Dresden's survivors were fleeing the centre of the city in all directions . . . Fear drove many people from their cellars to the meadows along the Elbe and to the Großer Garten, only to die there . . . during the second raid.<sup>86</sup>

As a synonym for the indiscriminate bombing of the German population, the attacks on Dresden have had spun around them a web of a great amount of legend, speculation, and myth.<sup>87</sup> The reports of low-level strafing by planes that by night and day allegedly fired on those who had fled from the conflagration to the Elbe meadows, and of phosphorus 'raining down' from the sky, like those of the number of refugees in Dresden during the raids, prove after critical examination to be speculation and exaggerated accounts, mistakes, or even the products of imagination.<sup>88</sup> The attack on Dresden prompted, on the other hand, the following insight from a one-time SPD city councillor: 'One can imagine quite vividly the mood of panic there is bound to be among the flood of refugees streaming back. After everything that had happened there is the impression that the war is, by vast steps, moving to its close, and that every day it is prolonged is only costing useless loss of lives. But for the Nazis it is a matter of saving their necks, so they are letting a lot of people go to their

<sup>83</sup> Bergander, *Dresden*, 138–9, 167; Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 402–14; Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 663–4; Schnatz, *Tiefflieger*.

<sup>84</sup> Seeming to bear out sources of the Dresden *Marshall- und Bestattungsamt*, see Reichert, 'Verbrannt', 40. Bergander, *Dresden*, 229–31, in his well-sourced study first published in 1977 took a figure of some 35,000 dead as probable. Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 414, on the other hand bases himself on at least 35,000 to 40,000. According to recent research there were about 25,000 victims in Dresden; see for example Taylor, *Dresden*, 448.

<sup>85</sup> *Geschichten vom Überleben*, 179 (diary of Ruth Andreas Friedrich, 19 Feb. 1945).

<sup>86</sup> Quoted from *German History and Society*, 167–72 (letter from Julius Artur Rietschel to Robert and Ilse Propf, 17 Mar. 1945).

<sup>87</sup> Summarized in Bergander, *Dresden*; Schnatz, *Tiefflieger*; Evans, *Telling Lies about Hitler*, esp. 157–92.

<sup>88</sup> See Helmut Schnatz, 'Luftkriegslegenden in Dresden', in *historicum.net*, 17 Dec. 2003 (last accessed by author 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.bombenkrieg.historicum.net/themen/dresden.html](http://www.bombenkrieg.historicum.net/themen/dresden.html).

deaths.<sup>89</sup> The second bombing attack that had particularly disastrous results for the civilian population hit Pforzheim, the Baden town that was home to the watch and jewellery industry, on the night of 24/5 February 1945. That night the romantically sited 'gateway to the Black Forest', which at the outbreak of war had around 79,000 inhabitants, suffered its first and only raid.<sup>90</sup> The target of the 360 or so four-engined aircraft of Bomber Command was not the railway yards on the edge of the town in order to hamper German reinforcements to the western front, but the densely built-up town centre; this was bombed for twenty-two minutes on end, and totally destroyed by a firestorm. Probably as many as 17,000 lost their lives in this area bombing attack.

Another city that suffered a great deal of death and destruction right at the end of the war was Würzburg. On the night of 16/7 March 1945 RAF's 5 Bomber Group carried out an area bombing raid on this old town with its bishops' residence, using 225 four-engined bombers.<sup>91</sup> The massive release of stick incendiaries over the town centre caused a wide conflagration that destroyed the historic buildings. Some 5,000 inhabitants died, and more than 82 per cent of the built-up area was left in ruins. Bomber Command's last big night raid, by about 500 aircraft, was against Potsdam on 14/5 April 1945 and affected the whole area of the town; at least 3,500 were killed.<sup>92</sup>

On 12 March 1945 over 650 aircraft of the 8th USAAF raided the port of Swinemünde at the request of the chief of staff of the Soviet air force.<sup>93</sup> The attack covered the whole area of the town, including the Kurpark which was filled with columns of refugees. The Baltic seaside resort of Swinemünde in Pomerania, which at the start of the war had numbered barely 30,300 inhabitants as the chief town of the Kreis of Usedom-Wollin and was by October 1945 to be renamed Świnoujście, was in the spring of 1945 the destination for hundreds of thousands of refugees from East and West Prussia. At the time of the raid there were numerous refugee and hospital ships in the harbour. The American attack on the port has generated the same kind of emotional reaction and generating of legends as have those on Dresden.<sup>94</sup> According to local accounts and oral tradition 23,000 are said to have been killed in the bombing,<sup>95</sup> though scientific studies have worked on the basis of around 5,000 deaths.<sup>96</sup>

The same date of 12 March saw the heaviest attack flown against any European city during the Second World War: this was on Dortmund.<sup>97</sup> During March the

<sup>89</sup> Diary of O. Rommel (16 Feb. 1945), StadtA Hagen. Otto Rommel was up to 1933 an SPD city councillor in Hagen. He kept his diary from the summer of 1942 up to the first occupation of the town in April–May 1945. Rommel regularly listened to 'enemy radio stations', and compared their reports critically with those from the Wehrmacht and the regime's press communiqués.

<sup>90</sup> Moessner-Heckner, *Pforzheim*.

<sup>92</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 436.

<sup>93</sup> Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 461; Schnatz, *Swinemünde*.

<sup>94</sup> On the growth of legends see Schnatz, *Swinemünde*. Accounts, mostly of personal experiences, by contemporary witnesses can be found in *Das Inferno von Swinemünde*; Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 170–6; Bayer, *Das geplante Inferno*.

<sup>95</sup> Bayer, *Das geplante Inferno*, 99; Friedrich, *Der Brand*, 172.

<sup>96</sup> Schnatz, *Swinemünde*.

<sup>97</sup> Day Operation Sheet 1061, 12 Mar. 1945, Headquarters Bomber Command, PRO, AIR 14/3368.

industrial area of the Rhineland and Westphalia was to be bombed into a state where it was 'ripe for ground attack', and cut off as far as possible from all transport links with the rest of the Reich.<sup>98</sup> Like many another of the cities bombed at the end of the war, Dortmund too lacks reliable figures on its dead; up to the time the US army took it a month after the raid, around 890 had been counted.<sup>99</sup>

(d) *The Disintegration of Everyday Life*

Already by the autumn of 1944 those living in regions of the Reich close to the front were undergoing a new experience. Not only bombs, but shells from enemy artillery as well, were falling on them and making everyday life among the rubble and ruins more and more a matter of managing to even stay alive in the midst of a battlefield. On 9 March 1945, for instance, the first artillery shell exploded on the Krupp works in Essen; these lay some 30 kilometres from the river Rhine, which then formed the front line. One worker related his experience: 'This morning the first artillery shell came in. For a moment or two we thought it was our own guns firing. But when the first shell landed on our site we knew what was happening. The first one fell on the main administrative building right in front of the office window, and caused six deaths. The next was in machine shop No. 9, and killed two. Now things are really critical. With the planes it didn't happen so suddenly, and there was always time to take shelter.'<sup>100</sup> Having a marshalling yard made a town an important target, and a railway bridge, suspected troop encampments, or a tank workshop could now be the local population's undoing. Allied air reconnaissance towards the end of the war had become very efficient; photo-reconnaissance planes were flying over certain cities and regions almost daily to pinpoint repair work being done, troop movements, or conspicuous changes.

It was becoming clear that neither bunkers nor miracle weapons could offer any effective protection against the bombs, yet still there was a small crowd of fanatical supporters of the Nazi regime who wanted to 'fight to the last bullet'. On the evening of 15 March 1945 a man who was through his work well aware of the effects of the air raids lived through the last heavy attack on his home town of Hagen. It led him to totally give up hope: 'Fear and panic rule among the public. There is no public building left in the town, no business, and hardly any street. Only mountains of rubble and debris. I am churned up to the depths of my being, and cannot describe all of the horror. The air is filled with an eerie hissing and roaring. I stand around with others, baffled and not knowing what to do . . . after the impressions of this past night, I've taken off my Party badge.'<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Isolation of the Ruhr, 17 Feb. 1945, SHAEF (M) Air Staff to Headquarters Bomber Command, 8th USAAF, 2nd Tactical Air Force, 9th Tactical Air Force, 1st Tactical Air Force, 19th Tactical Air Force: Allocation of Areas for Interdiction of the Ruhr, 3 Mar. 1945, PRO, AIR 14/1426; see also Webster and Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive*, iii. 254–5; *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, iii. 732–3; Mierzejewski, *Collapse*, 169–72.

<sup>99</sup> Operational Research Section Bomber Command, Report S 238: The effect of Air Attack on the city and district of Dortmund, 28 Aug. 1945, appendix I/1, table 2 (Major Raids on Town), PRO, AIR 14/1522.

<sup>100</sup> Römer diary (12 Mar. 1945), StadtA Hagen.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. (16 Mar. 1945).



Living through this devastating raid and the bombing that had preceded it led the man to break with the Party after belonging to it for eight years, now seeing it as the real origin of the disastrous situation on the home front. The loss of any prospect for the future, fears for their families and their own existence, plus the realization that they had been left defenceless against the Allied bombing, made a great part of the German public abandon all hope of the final victory that Nazi propaganda was still heralding up to the very last days of the war.

On 16 March 1945 in Berlin Goebbels noted in his diary his impression of the war situation on the home front: 'One asks oneself each day in vain where it is leading. Our armaments potential and transport system are here crippled to such a degree that it is easy to calculate when the time will come when we so to speak stand on the edge of the void.'<sup>102</sup> Already six days later he was summing up a report from Hoffmann, the Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia: 'He says that in practical terms public life in his Gau is no longer possible at all. Transport is paralysed, and it has become impossible to move through the streets. The economy is laid low. Coal is no longer being dug, and no longer being transported. Far and wide there is not the slightest effort at defence to be seen. One can imagine what effect this is having on public morale.'<sup>103</sup>

The plainly approaching collapse of the Ruhr was in fact a clear signal to the population in other industrial regions. 'No more raw materials, we can't make anything. When the Ruhr is lost, then it's close-down time,' was one comment made in Hamburg in March 1945.<sup>104</sup> On 30 March a young flak auxiliary noted, about the increasing mention in Nazi propaganda of historical events (such as the Seven Years War and Wars of Liberation) and the still widely held belief in miracle weapons, that 'the only thing to still latch on to is the "new weapons", and history. No one believes in the new weapons any more. And nobody knows history. So it's clear to people that our cause is lost.'<sup>105</sup> For pilots of the fighter-bombers of the 9th USAAF's 29th Tactical Air Command flying over the ruined cities of western Germany, the approach of the end of the war was evident: 'Groups of civilians and military personnel were reported mostly moving north-east, east, or south-east. Massed troops who were waving white flags, and did not disperse when our planes approached, were seen . . . Excellent results in the extreme were achieved by the 373rd Group in attacks on highway transport, troops concentrations, and in setting fires in woods and towns with Napalm and Rockets.'<sup>106</sup> By this time the 'final battle' had long been well under way everywhere in the Reich.

<sup>102</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xv. 519 (16 Mar. 1945).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 564 (22 Mar. 1945).

<sup>104</sup> *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, doc. 87, 390 (report for 8–14 Mar. 1945).

<sup>105</sup> *Die Zusammenbruchsgesellschaft*, 73.

<sup>106</sup> A-2 Periodic Reports No. 167 (30 Mar. 1945), United States Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.



## VIII. The Bombing War in Figures

THERE are varying figures for the deaths among the population of what was once the German Reich.<sup>1</sup> A total of 11,228 deaths has been attested for the period 1940, 1941, and 1942.<sup>2</sup> The number of 6,824 registered air-raid deaths for 1942 in the Reich is roughly the same as the 6,954 killed in Britain by German bombs in September 1940 alone.<sup>3</sup> A figure of around 100,000 victims of Allied bombs is assumed for the whole of 1943.<sup>4</sup> In May 1944 Goebbels observed that up to then a total of 122,000 persons had been killed in air raids, and a further 231,000 injured.<sup>5</sup> By early December of that year he was mentioning 185,000 deaths thus far, with more than 337,000 injured.<sup>6</sup> When the war was over the Allies tried to get a picture of the losses among the civilian population. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), whose staff from 1944/5 set up detailed investigations mainly in the occupation zones of the western Allies,<sup>7</sup> noted in the report of the Civilian Defense Division between January 1943 and January 1945 a total of 351,355 deaths; there are no data for the months of February–April 1945.<sup>8</sup> The final report by the USSBS Medical Branch, on the other hand, came to the conclusion that 422,000 had been killed in Allied air attacks.<sup>9</sup> In 1956 the Federal Republic's Statistics Office finally published a figure of 410,000 for deaths due to the air war on the territory of the Reich within its 31 December 1937 borders.<sup>10</sup> To this figure can be added, according to these calculations, around 32,000 foreigners and prisoners of war together with 23,000 members of the police and Wehrmacht. Taking refugees into account, the Federal Statistics Office arrived at 635,000 air-raid deaths for the territory of

<sup>1</sup> There has so far been no detailed analysis and interpretation of casualties in the bombing war among the population of the kind that Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, has carried out for the military sphere.

<sup>2</sup> Groehler, 'Der strategische Luftkrieg', 343.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronology and Index of the Second World War*, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Groehler, 'Der strategische Luftkrieg', 343.

<sup>5</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xii. 260 (9 May 1944).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv. 139 (2 Dec. 1944).

<sup>7</sup> On the USSBS see McIsaac, *Strategic Bombing: The United States Strategic Bombing Survey*. On the British side the British Bombing Survey Unit (BBSU) was employed on researching bomb damage, see *Strategic Air War*; on the BBSU see also the following online survey: Zuckerman Archive: British Bombing Survey Unit, University of East Anglia (last accessed by author 21 Mar. 2004), URL: [www.archiveshub.ac.uk/news/zabbsu.html](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/news/zabbsu.html).

<sup>8</sup> USSBS-Report No. 40, Civilian Defense Division: Final Report, chart 4, NA, RG 243:40. The report contains a month-by-month overview, where for the period January 1943 to January 1945 a total of 259,960 deaths are listed (pp. 3–4).

<sup>9</sup> USSBS Report No. 65, Medical Branch: The Effect of Bombing on Health and Medical Care in Germany, NA, RG 243:65. Report No. 3 from the USSBS (The Effects on Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy) however gives a figure of 375,000 dead, including 87 per cent German civilians, and 625,000 wounded, 136, NA, RG 243:3.

<sup>10</sup> Sperling, *Deutsche Bevölkerungsbilanz*. These data are also used in *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, i. 56–62.

the Reich within its 31 December 1942 borders. A more recent calculation from 1990 concluded that fatalities in the 1937-borders Reich amounted to between 360,000 and 370,000. For the Reich including Austria and the occupied territories and counting in forced labourers, prisoners of war, and Wehrmacht troops, losses are estimated at 406,000.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly the figures for air-raid deaths inside the 1937-borders Reich, reconstructed from a variety of sources, range between 360,000 and 465,000. In addition to these there was massive material damage,<sup>12</sup> which just in towns and cities in the Federal Republic with more than 20,000 inhabitants, together with Berlin, represented around 41 per cent of the prewar housing stock.<sup>13</sup> In large cities such as Cologne, Hamburg, Hanover, Essen, Kassel, Dortmund, Dresden, and Leipzig up to 70 per cent was lost. Particularly in (what were at that time) small and medium-sized towns like Paderborn, Düren, Jülich, Gießen, and Hanau the proportion of destroyed and damaged housing reached between 80 and 100 per cent.<sup>14</sup> The statistics compiled in each town in the course of the reconstruction make clear the extent of the acute shortage of living accommodation; the reconstruction effort dominated the housing policy of local authorities well into the 1950s.<sup>15</sup>

But in Britain and the USA, too, the cost of the air war was being counted. RAF Bomber Command alone lost between September 1939 and May 1945 a total of 55,500 aircrew (out of around 125,000), with only a small proportion (9,838) surviving the war as prisoners of war in Germany.<sup>16</sup> In the 8th USAAF 26,000 airmen (out of some 100,000 aircrew members) lost their lives on bombing missions, with a further 20,000 ending up in POW camps.<sup>17</sup> In Britain 60,595 persons had by the end of the war been killed in German air attacks; 51,509 in air raids (42,000 between 30 September 1940 and June 1941 alone) and 6,184 by V-1 flying bombs, 2,754 by V-2 rockets, and 148 by shells from long-range artillery.<sup>18</sup> The number of those killed in the course of German air raids in Europe can, especially in the east and south-east, only be estimated. Raids by the Luftwaffe on places like Warsaw, Rotterdam, Belgrade, Leningrad, and Stalingrad brought death to tens of thousands.<sup>19</sup> Between June 1944 and March 1945 the V-weapons falling on England, Belgium, and France killed more than 15,000.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Groehler, *Bombenkrieg*, 316–20; id., *Der strategische Luftkrieg*, 343–4.

<sup>12</sup> See also Beseler and Gutschow, *Kriegsschicksale*.

<sup>13</sup> *Dokumente deutscher Kriegsschäden*, i. 51.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 52–3. For a summary see also Hohn, *Die Zerstörung*.

<sup>15</sup> Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau*.

<sup>16</sup> Middlebrook and Everitt, *Bomber Command War Diaries*, 708.

<sup>17</sup> Neillands, *The Bomber War*, 379. If one includes those from the other air forces (such as tactical strike forces and the 15th USAAF), the USA and Britain lost around 100,000 aircrew in the European theatre of operations.

<sup>18</sup> Collier, *Defence of the United Kingdom*, 528.

<sup>19</sup> On the bombing of the Polish capital see Szarota, *Luftangriffe auf Warschau*. For an assessment of the air raids see Boog, 'Luftwaffe und unterschiedsloser Bombenkrieg', 449–50; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 360–6.

<sup>20</sup> Hellmold, *V 1*, 297; Neufeld, *Rocket and the Reich*, 273; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 420–58.

## **PART II**

### **The Uniformed Society?**

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## Introduction to Part II

HOLDING centre stage of Part II are the circumstances and limitations of the 'uniforming' of the military. Jürgen Förster begins by tracing the development of 'ideological warfare', especially in the Second World War. After September 1939 both the Wehrmacht command and the commanders in the field were active in the area of 'ideological support', in particular that of maintaining the troops' 'will for victory'. However, the longer the European war continued without achieving 'ordinary victories', the more importance was attached by both the political and the military leaderships to strengthening the attitude and mood of a Wehrmacht forced onto the defensive. Intensification of the 'ideological education' of the forces offered itself as a suitable means for doing this. Towards the end of December 1943 Hitler gave orders for National Socialist ideology to be 'thoroughly kneaded into the very fibre of the Wehrmacht', by making use of National Socialist political-education officers (*Nationalsozialistische Führungsoffiziere*, NSFOs). As a result, the military command now also lost its autonomy over the minds of the troops, thus far jealously guarded against the Party.

Ideological warfare was, however, far from being a new objective of the authoritarian government after 30 January 1933. It was more a legacy of the First World War, whose ideological captives were both the Reich chancellor Adolf Hitler and the Reichswehr minister Gen. Werner von Blomberg. For both of them—as for many of their older contemporaries—that war, the sudden surrender, the attempts at revolution by the Left, and the imposed peace treaty of Versailles represented fixed points in their thinking and actions after 1919. However, the affinity between Reichswehr and National Socialism derived not only from the partial identity of their politico-military goals for escaping the calamities of the Weimar Republic. It was based also on shared experience, shared memories, and shared bitterness at the collapse of the home front. The causal connection with the 'stab in the back' legend is of the utmost importance for understanding the deliberate efforts of the Reichswehr to 'remilitarize' Germany, efforts that began in 1919 and included a 'spiritual and ideological rearmament' of the population. Admittedly, these remilitarization plans, which far surpassed the narrow soldierly sphere, were more the result of military ideas on efficiency with a view to the 'future war' than an indispensable part of a political programme, as they were for Hitler. A radical right-wing politician and fierce critic of an 'apolitical' Reichswehr, he proceeded in his warrior-state model from an indissoluble link between state, society, and Wehrmacht. Only an authoritarian leadership, an ideologically aligned nation, and a powerful 'people's army' would restore to Germany the strength it needed for his racially based territorial, *Lebensraum* policy.

The ideological weapons brandished by the NSDAP and Reichswehr 'against everything un-German' were anti-Bolshevism, anti-Semitism, anti-pacifism, anti-parliamentarianism and anti-individualism. Erich Ludendorff's publication *Der totale Krieg* in 1935 (English title *The Nation at War*, publ. 1936) marked the peak of journalistic endeavours in the environment of 'soldierly nationalism'. In the area of ideological preparation for war and the elimination of domestic opponents, Hitler and Blomberg had shared out their tasks after 1933. While the NSDAP initially attempted to redirect the 'entire thinking' of Germans to fighting fitness and the needs of a future war, the leadership of the Reichswehr and later the Wehrmacht focused efforts on the 'ideological instilling' of the troops with the 'guiding ideas of the National Socialist state'. After 1938, when Hitler started on the road to war, the German nation was to be educated towards a 'fanatical belief in final victory'. At the same time the ideological schooling of the Wehrmacht began to orient itself towards the ideal type of the 'political soldier'.

Because the ideological mobilization of Nazi Germany for a war against Poland began rather late, there was in September 1939 no enthusiasm for war like that in August 1914. True, the brevity of the campaign in the east and the absence of any really painful reaction from the western powers improved the general mood. At that point the Wehrmacht command was anxious to prevent any 'sentimental longing for peace' from arising among the troops; instead their thoughts were to be directed towards the necessary 'decisive struggle' against France and Britain. Small wonder that the fascination of the surprising victory in the west in the summer of 1940 did more to strengthen the troops' readiness for war than any kind of 'ideological support and political education' from above. The rapid victory in the Balkans further consolidated the Wehrmacht's belief in its own invincibility.

The German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 lent the European war a new dimension. Operation BARBAROSSA was Hitler's real war. He was however not alone in being convinced that there existed a deep gulf between the Bolshevik Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, both racially and ideologically. Because of the German-Soviet alliance of 1939, the enlightenment of the troops as to the purpose of blitzkrieg in the east began only on the day of the attack. The Wehrmacht's sense of superiority suffered its first dent when the German operations ground to a halt in front of Leningrad, Moscow, and Rostov in the autumn of 1941 and when, to its surprise, the Red Army went over to the offensive. Although Hitler was convinced of the troops' determination to stand up to the 'red onslaught', army commanders in the field were being reminded in the summer of 1942, prior to 'Operation BLAU', that National Socialist ideology was to form the basis of their education.

It was the shock of Stalingrad that brought the psychological turning point, causing lasting damage to the Führer myth. Ideological warfare was therefore intensified 'to make every last man in the Wehrmacht believe in the war'. In the autumn of 1943 the commanders in the field in the east had demanded

that the 'ideological front' be just as solid as the 'weapons front'—significantly making direct reference to the Red Army which, they argued, was conducting a truly total war whereas in Germany people were only talking about it. Thus challenged by the troops, Hitler gave the word that the German officer should himself take on the same role as that of the Soviet commissar—to lead the soldiers entrusted to him not only tactically, but also politically as fanatical exponents of National Socialist ideology. Using the slogan 'What are we fighting for?', ideological warfare was intensified one final time, the NSFOs sent on special training courses, and commanding officers ideologically indoctrinated. Even though the Wehrmacht surrendered unconditionally on 7 May 1945, ideological warfare as practised in Germany since 1919 had nevertheless achieved the objective set for it: there was no repetition of November 1918. Even after Hitler's death, high-ranking officers still assessed the *Volksgemeinschaft* that had been created by National Socialism as something entirely positive. It had penetrated the Wehrmacht, strengthened the morale of the troops, and made the soldiers more fanatical.

This approach to elucidation of the question of how the morale of the soldiers can be explained, an approach in terms of a history of ideas and institutions, is followed by an approach from the angle of social history. The emergence, development, and disintegration of social and institutional structures of the Wehrmacht in the course of the Second World War are the central themes of the chapters by *Christoph Rass*. He approaches this question on three levels: the creation, existence, and end of large infantry formations; the social profile of an infantry division, analysed by taking one as an example; and personnel fluctuations in small or primary military groups at company level. In addition to military records and ego-documents it is, most of all, the quantifying evaluation of extensive random examinations of person-related papers – such as may be found in the *Bundesarchiv Zentralnachweisstelle* (whose files have recently been transferred to the *Deutsche Dienststelle*), the *Deutsche Dienststelle* itself, or the tracing service of the German Red Cross – that provide the empirical basis of this (both chronological and structure-oriented) examination.

A subdivision into social development periods of infantry divisions established by the Wehrmacht distinguishes, in principle, three phases: the build-up of the Wehrmacht between the beginning of the war in September 1939 and the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, a phase of adaptation and development of its structures from mid-1941 to mid-1944, and the dissolution or rather destruction of social and institutional connections between mid-1944 and the end of the war in May 1945. While the dynamic of the first phase resulted from the rapid personnel and structural expansion of the Wehrmacht and that of the final period from the massive casualties in the inferno of the retreat and the final battles, the social profile of Wehrmacht units in the middle period was—measured using a series of fundamental structural and social parameters—comparatively stable.



As models these macrostructures can be duplicated at division level in precise detail. The two central factors of social-structure change in the Wehrmacht's units were the military losses of men killed, wounded, and missing that caused the bulk of the changes moulding the social profile, and the intake of replacement personnel that could provide a social homogeneity in the personnel of military units that was based less on individuals than on socio-cultural moulds and military socialization experience. The ratios of and interactions between these two variables decisively influenced the social development and hence also the military efficiency of a Wehrmacht unit. Altogether it is possible—with all due caution in view of the still only sample-based character of the present study—to work on the basis of a lesser overall volume of personnel in a large military formation, measured by the number of individuals belonging to it, as well as that of a more continuous social development over time throughout the course of the war, than have hitherto been assumed by researchers.

This observation is confirmed by the examination of primary military groups on a new basis of sources that permits a long-term observation of group development at company level. The hitherto accepted picture of small military groups as static structures proves inadequate in this context. It is replaced by a differentiated model of the development of social structures, with the help of which the social profile of Wehrmacht units can be defined with regard to their military performance capacity and their role as those who put German warfare into practice.

The contribution by *Wilfried Heinemann* demonstrates that the mass readiness to act as implementers of Hitler's warfare came up, in individual cases, against limits. Military resistance during the war has to be seen in the overall context of national-conservative resistance to the Nazi regime. Only the originally system-supporting groups—the officer corps, and the civil servants—held the instruments of power in 1944 through which the Nazi system might be overthrown.

Radical opposition, all the way up to the planning of a coup d'état, stemmed from initially system-conforming, alternative concepts for optimizing the Reich's conduct of the war. Criticism was aroused by the totally inappropriate top structure, by the resulting dilettante conduct of the war at all levels, and also by the criminal orders and practices in the war against the Soviet Union. At an early stage it became clear that continuing with the war was vastly beyond the human and material resources of the Reich, and that the war could no longer be won. An initial reaction by those who later became the resistance consisted mostly of pointing out problems through the classic military reporting channels, and then waiting for them to be remedied by those at the top.

Only gradually did a few officers come to recognize how unrealistic any such ideas were, since these took no account of Hitler's fundamentally criminal war aims. Increasingly the criminal war was directed against not only 'Bolsheviks' and Jews, but also German society and, more especially, against

its 'reactionary' elements. Acting against this war henceforth became the core goal of national-conservative resistance.

This history of the resistance also explains why it was difficult then, both in the Reich and abroad, to distinguish system-breaking radical resistance from struggles between various wings within the system. Lack of recognition from abroad, coupled with the continued insistence on unconditional surrender, thus failed to offer any acceptable foreign policy prospects even to a revolutionary government.

The leading figures of the military resistance, especially Stauffenberg, did not—unlike Carl Friedrich Goerdeler and Ulrich von Hassell—regard themselves as executive organs for the politicians, but were planning, at least for a transitional period, a military dictatorship and an end to the war on a purely military level. Concealed behind this were also manifest differences in fundamental political orientation. Nevertheless, the continually reduced freedom of action and the diminishing prospects of success by the opposition—going beyond all military and political goals during the period immediately prior to 20 July 1944—clearly reveal the basic, ethical motivation that inspired the resistance movement.

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# A. Ideological Warfare in Germany, 1919 to 1945

JÜRGEN FÖRSTER

## I. The Legacy of the First World War

GERMANY'S 'remilitarization' after 1933 should not be seen simply as the human and material rearmament of the Reichswehr. It was a much more comprehensive concept. The planned establishment of an efficient military instrument for the strategic struggle against the international order of Versailles<sup>1</sup> was inseparably linked to Germany's 'ideological and spiritual rearmament'. The German nation, divided politically, socially, and denominationally, was to be turned into a united, national, combat-ready 'society bound by fate'. However, the military and educational 'remilitarization' of Germany was not a new goal, the goal of a new 'national' government in 1933, but a legacy of the First World War whose ideological captives were both the Reich chancellor Adolf Hitler and the Reichswehr minister Werner von Blomberg. War, defeat, revolution, and Versailles were the key points of reference for their thinking and action.

The affinity between National Socialism and Reichswehr/Wehrmacht was the result not only of their well-known 'partial identity of aims',<sup>2</sup> but also of the 'partial identity of experience and memory'.<sup>3</sup> This was based on a 'foundation of shared bitterness' (Sebastian Haffner). True, the First World War had left a double legacy: alongside genuine and 'acquired' experience there was also an attempt to learn a lesson from the painful past for the 'future war', so that there could never be another November 1918. Nowhere is the legacy of the First World War more obvious than in the sphere of the 'spiritual mobilization' of the Germans after 1919. That date had seen not only the collapse of the great power status of the German Reich and its monarchist system, but the victors had also prescribed a new military system for the Weimar Republic.<sup>4</sup>

The educational militarization of the German nation, striven for by the political and military leadership, was supported or demanded by a vast number of official, semi-official, and private publications in the 1920s and

<sup>1</sup> On the rearmament of the Reichswehr see *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 383 ff., 395 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kroener, 'Strukturelle Veränderungen', 271. See Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 16 ff., and Gerd Krumeich's lecture on 'Krieg in den Köpfen der Soldaten' [War in the Minds of the Soldiers] 1918–1933' at the 42nd German Historians' Conference in Frankfurt, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> See Förster, 'Vom Führerheer der Republik'.

1930s. The subject of these publications from the circles of 'soldierly nationalism' was not so much the real causes of the German collapse in 1918 as the value and usefulness of the First World War for a better future for Germany.<sup>5</sup> The ideological weapons employed were anti-Bolshevism, anti-Semitism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-liberalism, anti-individualism, and anti-pluralism. The desired authoritarian state itself defined its enemies.

One of the high points of journalistic discussion of the First World War was undoubtedly Erich Ludendorff's book *Der totale Krieg*, published in 1935 (English title *The Nation at War*, publ. 1936). This hero of times past believed that the spiritual mobilization of the nation was just as important a war-deciding factor as the actual war of armaments and the mobilization of all resources. According to Ludendorff, true 'psychological unity' of the nation and its resistance to crises could only be guaranteed if mental preparation for war and its conduct were accompanied by the elimination of internal enemies within and outside the Wehrmacht.<sup>6</sup> Both Hitler and Blomberg had already set a few milestones in this area even before Ludendorff's book was published.

Hitler's concept of Germany's future armed forces was embedded in his vision of a new German society. He proceeded from an indissoluble link between state, society, and Wehrmacht. It was through authoritarian leadership, an inwardly united people, and a strong people's army that Germany would once more gain the strength it needed for a 'nationally understood territorial policy'.<sup>7</sup> The political, social, and military 'reorganization of the German body politic' was to be accomplished uniformly according to the three 'fundamental principles' of National Socialism—the values of race, of personality, and of self-preservation in life's struggle.<sup>8</sup> The ideal of a national community was matched in the military sphere by a people's army based on general conscription. The one without the other was unthinkable to Hitler. As early as in Point 22 of its programme of 24 February 1920 the NSDAP had demanded the 'abolition of the mercenary forces and the creation of a people's army'. Accordingly, in his *Zweites Buch* (unpublished at that time, English title: *Hitler's Secret Book*, publ. 1962) Hitler in 1928 criticized the Reichswehr as an army of mercenaries lacking any close link with the people, while defining the hoped-for 'truly German' people's army as the 'most socialist institution' of the state.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, i, 32 ff. and 77 ff.; Deist, 'Auf dem Wege zur ideologisierten Kriegführung', 382 ff. Other significant examples of contemporary writings are: Anker, *Unsere Stunde kommt*; Volkmann, *Der Marxismus und das deutsche Heer*; Thimme, *Weltkrieg ohne Waffen*; Volkmann-Leander, *Soldaten oder Militärs?*; Reinhardt, *Wehrkraft und Wehrwille*; Altrichter, *Die seelischen Kräfte*; Oertzen, *Grundzüge der Wehrpolitik*. Also published in 1938/9: Ziegler, *Volk ohne Führung*. The opposite view, that of a militia-style army, was championed by Wilhelm Bölske, *Deutschlands neue Wehrmacht*. A merciless squaring of accounts with German military policy was published in Paris in the spring of 1939: Albert Schreiner, *Vom totalen Krieg*. This was republished at the beginning of the 1980s in the GDR.

<sup>6</sup> Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, 25–54; 'Juda' and 'Rome' were specifically named as opponents of Germany's 'recovery'. See Chickering, *Sore Loser*.

<sup>7</sup> Hitler, 'Reichswehr und deutsche Politik', 1; François-Poncet, *The Fateful Years*.

<sup>8</sup> See Zitellmann, *Hitler*; Förster, 'Vom Führerheer der Republik'.

<sup>9</sup> Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Book*, 85–7; see Fallois, *Kalkül und Illusion*.

In the spring of 1929 the leader of the NSDAP came out with his politico-military goals. In the form of an ultimatum, verbally and in writing, Hitler demanded that the Reichswehr decide between the Social Democratic and the National Socialist military programme – either with Marxism into the abyss or with the German national resurgence to freedom.<sup>10</sup> ‘We admit openly that it is our intention to transform the German people once more into a hammer.’ It was not the task of the Reichswehr to be apolitical and, in the hands of ‘artful politicians’, to become a police force and an executive organ of the League of Nations. Hitler labelled the Reichswehr’s loyal, above-party-politics fulfilment of its duties in line with the constitution as ‘spinelessness’, and called upon the Reichswehr at long last to fulfil its political mission, that is to say to serve the preservation of the nation. In its existing form Hitler saw the Reichswehr purely as a great ‘depot of officers and sergeants’ for a people’s army that would, at the same time, function as an institution for the disciplined upbringing of the German people.

It was on these political premisses that Col. (ret.) Konstantin Hierl developed a stringent military programme and proclaimed it at the NSDAP rally in Nuremberg at the beginning of August 1929. In his keynote speech Hierl examined Hans von Seeckt’s ‘politico-military picture of the future’ in detail. His basic mistake, Hierl argued, was that while he had wished to pursue a national defence policy, he had allowed himself to be misused as a tool of anti-German domestic policy. No healthy army could in the long run exist within a sickly state. That was why National Socialism wanted a ‘military state’. Beyond the creation of a people’s army on the basis of general conscription, nation and state should, in peacetime, be systematically prepared for the tasks of war; only thus did a ‘German war of liberation’ have any prospect of success. ‘Unconditional subjection and strict discharge of duties by the individual in the service of the community, . . . that is education for true socialism. Socialism and general conscription belong together.’<sup>11</sup> Youngsters made military in body and spirit while still at school would subsequently, in the Wehrmacht, be trained in ‘discipline and manly virtues’. This ideal of the German front-line fighter as propagated by the party offices in hundreds of thousand copies of Hans Zöberlein’s books *Der Glaube an Deutschland: Ein Kriegserleben von Verdun bis zum Umsturz* [Belief in Germany: War Experience from Verdun to the Revolution] and *Der Befehl des Gewissens: Ein Roman von den Wirren der Nachkriegszeit und der ersten Erhebung* [The Command of Conscience: A Novel about the Disorders of the Post-War Period and the First Rising]. This novel, appearing in 1937, contained such chapters as ‘The Jewish Question’

<sup>10</sup> Speech of 15 May 1929 in Munich, see ‘Wir und die Reichswehr’ in the Reichswehr special issue of *Völkischer Beobachter* of 26 Mar. 1929; repr. in Schüddekopf, *Das Heer und die Republik*, 281ff.; now Domarus, *Reden*, i. 45 ff. (not in English).

<sup>11</sup> Hierl, *Grundlagen*, 28–9. Hierl’s speech at the Party rally was published that same month by Eher-Verlag in Munich, with a preface by Gottfried Feder. In it Feder characterized National Socialism as ‘political front-line soldiering’.

and 'Jews Out!'<sup>12</sup> Thus an anti-Semitic line embarked on by Kurt Anker, a former staff officer, in his *Teut wider Juda* [German against Jew], was continued with even greater publicity effect.<sup>13</sup>

A year later Hitler once more came out clearly with his politico-military goals. The Reichswehr could very well be the 'framework army . . . for the future German people's army'.<sup>14</sup> On condition, however, that at long last it understood that its real task was preparation for war. From all these public statements it becomes clear that Hitler was no adherent of the idea of a militia, and that the so-called loyalty race for his favour between Reichswehr and SA in politico-military matters of structure was overemphasized after 1945.

Already in his article of 1930 Hitler stressed the need not only for a nationalist military attitude among the troops, but also for all civilian *Volksgenossen* to be equally convinced of the absolute necessity of a permanent struggle for life. That was to be achieved by a 'nationalist education'. In this National Socialist society of 'German *Volksgenossen*' there was no room for Jewish Germans. They were to be 'eliminated from the national community'.<sup>15</sup>

After 1919 the military leadership similarly strove for a remilitarization of German society. Admittedly, this concept was more the consequence of an exaggerated effort towards efficiency from the viewpoint of 'total war' than an inseparable part of a stringent political programme such as Hitler's. Of course, lurking behind the goal of a society-wide mobilization there was also the claim of the military elite to the preservation of its traditional position of power in state and society.<sup>16</sup> As early as August 1919 Lt.-Gen. Wilhelm Groener, chief of the Kolberg command, had told general staff officers of formations stationed in the east that the restitution of a people's army required the establishment of a small professional army 'for the training of leaders', and the physical toughening-up of 'the masses of the people, starting from youth'.<sup>17</sup> Of particular importance for 'militarizing our people', in his view, were the general staff officers, 'the truly good elements of the officers' corps', to whom the country must be grateful for having escaped Bolshevism.

<sup>12</sup> The first printing of *Glaube an Deutschland* appeared in 1931, the 18th (156,000th–165,000th) in 1936 at the Zentralverlag der NSDAP [Central Publishing House of the NSDAP]. By the time *Befehl des Gewissens* reached its 14th impression some 281,000–310,000 copies had been printed. See Schneider, 'Bestseller'.

<sup>13</sup> Leipzig, 1924. Anker, *Unsere Stunde kommt*, was published the previous year.

<sup>14</sup> Hitler, 'Reichswehr und deutsche Politik'; Domarus, *Reden*, i. 257, 438–9; see his statement in the Ulm Reichswehr trial on 25 Sept. 1930, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 156; Kershaw, *Nemesis*, 317. On the popularity of 'people's community' and 'people's army' among the younger officers see Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 68; id., *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 103, 120 (not in English); or Vietinghoff, 'Reichswehr und Nationalsozialismus vor 1933', 29–30 (written 1951), BA-MA N 574/24.

<sup>15</sup> Trend-setting article from 1930 by Gerhard Ludwig Binz, 'Das Judentum in der nationalsozialistischen Rechtsordnung', quoted from Steinbach, 'Vergangen, zerstört', 94 ff. On hostility towards Jews in the Weimar Republic see Walter, *Antisemitische Kriminalität*; Bergmann and Wetzel, 'Antisemitismus', 448 ff.

<sup>16</sup> See Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 52 ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Zwischen Revolution und Kapp-Putsch*, 195–6; see also the speech by Lt.-Col. Ernst van den Bergh on 3 May 1919, repr. in *Aus den Geburtsstunden*, 209–10.



The former quartermaster general saw himself both in the tradition of the Prussian reformers<sup>18</sup> and in agreement with Reich president Friedrich Ebert and Reichswehr minister Gustav Noske. Such ideas on the future of the Wehrmacht, exceeding the proper tasks of the Reichswehr, were in the tradition of 'national education' in imperial Germany and of the 'patriotic education' introduced by Ludendorff in 1917. Both endeavours were based on the military conviction that rearmament alone was insufficient for the waging of modern wars, and that it must continually be nurtured from 'all the roots of national strength'; the Wehrmacht must be inwardly strengthened and deeply anchored in the awareness of the nation.<sup>19</sup> Even though love of the monarchy could no longer be an official educational target of the Reichswehr, there still remained, as moral qualities expected of soldiers as well as of the nation supporting them, courage, enthusiasm, and readiness to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland's great goals. When, with the Defence Act of 23 March 1921, the Reichswehr lost its provisional character, it once more officially championed ideas for raising military-mindedness in Germany.

In this phase of a new military beginning, accompanied though it was by serious domestic and foreign crises, Gen. of infantry Von Seeckt, for many years chief of GHQ army command, found himself in a key position. During his brief time as deputy Reichswehr minister towards the end of March 1920 he had seen to it that the 'Welfare Department' of the Reichswehr ministry, responsible for the education and training of troops, was placed under the *Truppenamt* (an innocuous title disguising the general staff, forbidden under the Versailles treaty) before the new minister, Dr Otto Geßler, totally dissolved it on 21 May 1920, sharing out its duties among several departments.<sup>20</sup> Seeckt set out his 'fundamental ideas' for both the structure and the education of the army in January 1921, i.e. before the issue of the Defence Act.<sup>21</sup> What Seeckt had in mind was an elite army based on efficiency, discipline, inner unity, and the traditions of the imperial army, but which would, at the same time, be 'a living member of the entire national body', the body of a nation ready and willing to fight even a 'desperate struggle' on its own.<sup>22</sup> He intended not only to train a small number of professional soldiers for war, but with them develop the 'leader army' for the people's army of the future. Seeckt's educational target was to 'turn every member of the army into a soldier, according to his character, skills, and knowledge, one who is independent and self-assured, dedicated and keen to assume responsibility, a man and a leader'.<sup>23</sup> To him,

<sup>18</sup> On Groener's politico-military concept see Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener*, 21 ff.

<sup>19</sup> See Horneffer, *Soldaten-Erziehung*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> See *Aus den Geburtsstunden*, 11–12, 218 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Rabenau, *Seeckt*, 474–5; *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, 224 ff.; see Thoß, *Menschenführung*, 125 ff.; Messerschmidt, 'Das preußische Militärwesen', 515 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum of January 1921 on 'the reconstruction of our Wehrmacht', repr. in Rabenau, *Seeckt*, 476–7.

<sup>23</sup> Order on 'The basics of education', 1 Jan. 1921, repr. in *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, 226.

general conscription was the 'natural' military constitution that had entered the flesh and blood of every German.<sup>24</sup>

The chief of the admiralty, Adm. Paul Behncke, similarly viewed the *Reichsmarine* merely as 'a foundation, a core' of a 'future navy, such as our nation of 60-70 million needs'.<sup>25</sup> On the matter of education there was also clear agreement between army and navy. Behncke demanded that every serviceman should feel like a 'leader of the people'. 'He should be proud of his profession, at the same time modest and polite, inspired by the will to recapture for the serviceman's profession the position of the most noble and most respected estate in the state.'<sup>26</sup>

There was deliberately no integration of the Reichswehr into the democratic state of Weimar, even though an understanding of the 'general principles of national and political life' were demanded – especially by Seeckt in an order of 20 October 1920. The Reichswehr was to be an 'island of order' outside the 'party squabbles' of parliamentary democracy. It should 'concern itself' with politics, but not 'practise' any, as Maj.-Gen. Ritter von Mohl put it to Seeckt on 20 March 1920. Nine years later, however, the Reichswehr minister Groener felt obliged to remind commanding officers of their 'serious duty' of educating servicemen of all ranks towards a 'supra-party and unpolitical attitude'. 'The firm fabric of the Wehrmacht depends on it.'<sup>27</sup>

The public's attitude to the forces played a major part in the thinking of the Reichswehr leadership. Because a 'disease' had been diagnosed among the public, triggered by Bolshevism, pacifism, and democracy, the Reichswehr had to be 'immunized' against this, after which the public had first to regain its moral health, that is to say become enthusiastic for war, before there could be any thought of building up a 'people's army'. Seeckt in 1921 regarded it as the task of the army not merely to cooperate in 'elevating the national idea' but to assume the leadership in this endeavour.<sup>28</sup> Two years later the Reichswehr made its collaboration with the political leadership dependent on the way the government of the day dealt with the aimed-at 'militarization of the nation' that would be the basis of the establishment of a 'free Greater Germany'.<sup>29</sup> On the grounds that the hoped-for 'recovery' of Germany under a 'purely national government' was not yet realized, the Reichswehr demanded sole responsibility for the defence of the country.

<sup>24</sup> See the draft of the Reichswehr Act, 19 Dec. 1919, BA, R 43 I/609.

<sup>25</sup> Adm. Behncke, address to officers and officials on 11 Jan. 1924 in Kiel, BA-MA RM 6/62; repr. in excerpts in Rahn, *Reichsmarine*, 261–74. See the secret naval service instruction (No. 352/15), repr. in *Der Kampf der Marine gegen Versailles 1919–1935* (Berlin, 1937).

<sup>26</sup> Adm. Behncke, address of 11 Jan. 1924, BA-MA RM 6/62.

<sup>27</sup> Order of 29 Nov. 1929, BA-MA RM 92/5361.

<sup>28</sup> Rabenau, *Seeckt*, 475; see Hansen, 'Reichswehr und Republik', 46 ff. In the autumn of 1923, however, Seeckt rejected the proposal of Col. Hierl for the introduction by law of one year's labour service for all German men aged between 17 and 20. The memorandum of 18 Nov. 1923 repr. in extract in Hierl, *Im Dienst für Deutschland*, 180–1.

<sup>29</sup> See the general staff department's 'Beurteilung der inneren Lage' [Assessment of the domestic situation] of 7 Dec. 1923, repr. in Hürten, *Das Krisenjahr*, 191 ff.

In the interests of a future 'war of liberation' against the 'traditional enemy', France, Lt.-Col. Joachim von Stülpnagel, chief of the army department (T 1) of the *Truppenamt*, was prepared in 1924 to 'transform the republic into a supremely nationalistic and militarist regime'.<sup>30</sup> Since only the employment of 'the nation's entire strength' would ensure the success of a 'German war in the future', Stülpnagel demanded a 'total transformation' of domestic political conditions and the 'moral preparation of the nation and the army for war'. Considering that the 'mass of our people' was not yet fully seized by the 'categorical imperative of fighting and dying for the fatherland', Stülpnagel, among other things, recommended 'the national and military upbringing of our young people in school and university, the creation of hatred against the foreign enemy' as well as a state-conducted 'struggle against Internationale and pacifism, against everything un-German'.<sup>31</sup>

It was certainly no coincidence that, four weeks after Stülpnagel's lecture, another department of the *Truppenamt* submitted a memorandum on the 'ideological preparation of the nation for war'.<sup>32</sup> This emphasized the interdependence of personnel and material rearmament of the Reichswehr, as well as the necessary mental attitude of the people to war. As the government was incapable of this task, the Wehrmacht should increasingly bring its influence to bear on those circles on which it already had some sway. Unlike Stülpnagel, the author of this memorandum recommended, first of all, the achievement of a uniform concept within the Reichswehr on the necessary basis for a future war, before actually tackling the attitude of circles close to the Reichswehr but outside it. 'The nation will cooperate effectively when it sees that all parts of the Wehrmacht work along the same clear line.' The object of this enlightenment was to make the nation 'see that "being prepared" [for a future war] is far less dangerous than deliberate defencelessness'. The mobilization of the German nation outside the framework of the Reichswehr should be a task of the 'Reich Defence Council' presided over by the Reich chancellor – a solution favoured by the *Truppenamt*.<sup>33</sup>

The 'future war' – far more than the First World War – was viewed by the *Reichsheer*, the Reich army, as a 'people's war' from the start. That was why in the summer of 1923 'physical training' and the 'revival of the military will of our people by school and propaganda' were regarded as further prerequisites of the necessary rebuilding of German military strength.<sup>34</sup> These demands

<sup>30</sup> Deist, 'Auf dem Wege zur ideologisierten Kriegführung', 398.

<sup>31</sup> Lecture to officers of the Reichswehr ministry, repr. in Hürten, *Das Krisenjahr*, 266–72; see the lecture on similar lines by Capt. Walter Behschnitt (T 2) of 4 Apr. 1925, BA-MA RH 2/417.

<sup>32</sup> Hürten, *Das Krisenjahr*, 308–14. This memorandum took up the idea of new systematic military propaganda right among the people, as suggested the previous year by Lt.-Col. Erich von Bonin, chief of the army organization department in the *Truppenamt* (T 2), *ibid.* 23 ff. As early as 1922 the young Reichswehr Col. Kurt Hesse in a private paper on 'General Psychologos' had called for a 'purposeful psychological training of the entire German population'.

<sup>33</sup> RWM (Heer), T A, T 1, Ib, No. 1277/geh., 11 Dec. 1924, sgd. Hasse, BA-MA RH 2/407.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum 'Objectives and ways for the next few years of our war preparations', 14 Aug. 1925, BA-MA RH 2/417, and USHMM, Washington, Robert Kempner papers.

were to be realized by the ministry of the interior, competent for such matters. The overall objective of the military endeavours was 'preparation for a defensive war for the preservation of German vital requirements and for the repulse of any attack'. Just as the Reich army was 'never on its own' sufficient 'for improvising an army',<sup>35</sup> and therefore needed the establishment of a secret personnel organization, the so-called *Landesschutz*, or homeland defence,<sup>36</sup> in order to repel frontier encroachments, so the Reichswehr depended on help from the Weimar republic to achieve its ideological goals, and therefore was obliged to cooperate with the civilian executive.<sup>37</sup>

Because of the prevailing political conditions the plans for a comprehensive militarization of the 'multiply divided' German society (in Heinrich August Winkler's phrase) remained a patchwork for a long period, even though timely political mobilization was frequently demanded by interested right-wing circles. These considered the people's 'conviction' of the necessity of a future war to be 'always more durable than euphoria' as in 1914.<sup>38</sup> However, the ideological 'militarization of the entire German nation' was demanded even in Social Democrat quarters, and the will to remilitarize endorsed. But the relevant reflections of the Prussian minister president Otto Braun, of March 1929, presumably vanished in the party archives. Although, at the Magdeburg party congress towards the end of May 1929, the SPD expressed conditional endorsement of the Reichswehr as a 'serving limb' of the republic, it did not come out in favour of universal militarization.<sup>39</sup>

The ministry of the interior in particular saw to it that youth and student organizations, in line with Article 177 of the Versailles treaty, did not concern themselves with 'military matters'. In August 1930 Reichswehr minister Groener made it plain to his colleague Dr Joseph Wirth that he considered it 'an impossible and politically dangerous situation' that the government should curb the 'natural wish for militarization' of the radical right-wing students with instruments that were granted to it only by the Versailles treaty. He pleaded for 'educational work' by the state and the teaching body, to prevent on the one hand any playing at soldiers that could have dangerous foreign policy repercussions, while on the other making the young people militarily fit and leading them out of the camp of radicalism.<sup>40</sup> It appears that Groener met with little support, as two months later his right-hand man Maj.-Gen. Kurt

<sup>35</sup> BA-MA RH 2/417.

<sup>36</sup> *Truppenamt*, T 2, No. 448/25 of 4 Nov. 1925, RWM, W, No. 213/29 of 27 Mar. 1929, sgd. Groener, and *Truppenamt*, T 2, of 22 Apr. 1931, BA-MA RH 12-1/3, RH 1/v. 14 and Wi IF5/405. See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, i. 36-9; Geyer, *Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit*, 106 ff.; Kroener, 'Mobilmachungsplanungen', and extensively Nakata, *Grenz- und Landesschutz*. The *Landesschutz* was to be led by 1,200 to 1,500 ex-officers.

<sup>37</sup> See Geyer, *Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit*, 234.

<sup>38</sup> Banse, *Germany, Prepare for War*, 405.

<sup>39</sup> See *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte*, vi. 143-4; Schüddekopf, *Das Heer und die Republik*, 244-5.

<sup>40</sup> Letter of 1 Aug. 1930, BA-MA RH 8/v.1368.

von Schleicher, head of the ministerial office, felt betrayed by the ministry of the interior in the 'matter of the militarization of the population'.<sup>41</sup>

On 8 October 1931 Reichswehr minister Groener also took on the duties of the minister of the interior;<sup>42</sup> now the Reichswehr was able to address directly the project of a state-controlled 'militarization of the nation'. Groener was not alone in deploring the 'poisoning of the souls of the young and the soul of the people' by pacifist circles.<sup>43</sup> Maj.-Gen. Ludwig Beck, who had laid down command of 5 Artillery Regiment to devote himself to the drafting of central command regulations, in a private letter similarly deplored the disruption and break-up 'of morale and unselfish dedication to the service of the nation' through so-called implementation policy and false socialism. He hoped that 1932 would bring 'the long-inevitable final struggle for the recovery of our internal health'.<sup>44</sup>

The old Reichswehr plan for the 'preliminary training of young people' scored at least one organizational success. On 13 September 1932 Reich president Paul von Hindenburg convened a 'Reich Committee on the Physical Training of the Young'. Although its chairman was the Reich minister of the interior, its management was in the hands of Gen. of Infantry (ret'd.) Edwin von Stülpnagel, who had Lt.-Col. Walter Model as his chief of staff.<sup>45</sup> In his very first appeal to the country on 3 June 1932 Schleicher had promised to see to it 'that the ideological and physical forces of our people that represent the indispensable foundation of our homeland defence are strengthened'.<sup>46</sup> It was the task of the Reich committee to educate male youth in such a way that 'a healthy, efficient body of men ready for action' was available to the Reichswehr.<sup>47</sup>

Although by the end of 1932 the Reichswehr had made some considerable progress in the matter of state-organized 'military toughening-up of youth', as demanded by Groener in August 1919, the complementary 'introduction of soldierly thinking', as demanded by the chief of staff of the new Reich chancellor Schleicher, responsible for youth matters, Lt.-Col. Eugen Ott, was still lacking in schools policy.<sup>48</sup> With the enactment of 'Gleichschaltung', or overall ideological alignment, after 30 January 1933 the road was clear for a uniform schooling and educational policy with mandatory military sport directed

<sup>41</sup> Liebmann's minutes of the conference on 25 Oct. 1930 at the Reichswehr ministry, BA-MA MSg 1/1668.

<sup>42</sup> See Hürter, 'Vor lauter Taktik schlapp?' <sup>43</sup> Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener*, 296–7. The First World War's 'Field Marshal Forward' (Blücher) had long been active in the sphere of repulsing ideas hostile to the military. See Schwarzmüller, *Zwischen Kaiser und 'Führer'*, 216 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Gen. (ret'd.) Konrad Ernst von Gossler, 26 Dec. 1931, repr. in Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, Doc. 6, 335.

<sup>45</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, i. 97 ff. and 110 ff.; Rautenberg, *Deutsche Rüstungspolitik*, 239 ff.; Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener*, 308 n. 11, and 311, as well as BA-MA MSg 1/573.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted from Geyer, *Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit*, 272.

<sup>47</sup> Schleicher letter to Reich chancellor von Papen, 7 Oct. 1932, *ibid.* 295–6.

<sup>48</sup> Liebmann minutes of the commanding officers' conference in Dec. 1932, BA-MA MSg 1/1668.

towards a militarization of the young. After April 1933 the chairmanship in the 'Reich Committee' had been taken over by Franz Seldte, the Reich minister for labour and youth physical training; management, following Stülpnagel's death, was in the hands of the SA leader Georg von Neufville. In the autumn of 1933 the Reich committee with all its tasks and institutions passed to the newly created 'Head of Education of the SA', Obergruppenführer Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger.<sup>49</sup> Military training proper, however, was in the hands of the Reichswehr.

Blomberg had approached Seldte on 18 March 1933 with a view to advancing the 'necessary reorganization of national youth work' in the service of the military idea and military efficiency. He sent him a lengthy study of his department, demanding the 'immediate tackling of a four-year plan' in the areas of physical exercise, labour service, public education, and social welfare.<sup>50</sup>

Internally Blomberg felt compelled to dispel the concerns of the forces that the 'comprehensive plans' of the NSDAP in the areas of youth physical training and labour service might threaten the 'Wehrmacht's unique position' within the state. The tasks of the military organizations – the SA and the Stahlhelm—were, the Reichswehr minister pointed out on 14 March 1933, only in the field of national education and physical and ideological preparatory training. 'Unfulfillable requests brought to the Wehrmacht by the victors in the struggle for the nation came mostly from lower levels.'<sup>51</sup> On 27 July 1933 the chief of the ministerial office, Walter von Reichenau, 'by order and on behalf of' Blomberg, issued general 'directives for premilitary training' in Germany. Youth and scouting games and SA sport, in combination with military training, were to 'produce the modern soldier without whom the German Wehrmacht could not accomplish its great task for the future'.<sup>52</sup>

Wilhelm Frick, the new minister of the interior, likewise saw a need for action. Addressing the *Länder* ministers on 9 May 1933, he described service in and for a *Volksgemeinschaft* ready to defend itself as the guiding point of a 'uniform German national education'. The ideological and physical training of youth were a necessary prerequisite: they 'must [again] see military service

<sup>49</sup> See Krüger's meeting with Col. Heinrich von Vietinghoff, head of Wehrmacht dept. in the ministry, on 5 July 1933, IMT, xxix. 2–3.

<sup>50</sup> BA-MA, RH 1/v. 13 b; See Geyer, *Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit*, 400–1. Through its 'Liaison Officer with the Reich Youth Leader' the Wehrmacht later exercised influence on the military training of the Hitler Youth. See the report of Lt.-Col. Erwin Rommel of 1 July 1937, formerly MA DDR (Potsdam, now BA-MA), W-03/112; on the Hitler Youth generally Schubert-Weller, *Hitler-Jugend*.

<sup>51</sup> BA-MA RH 12-5/43.

<sup>52</sup> RWM, TA (T 4 III), No. 533/33 of 27 July 1933, BA-MA, RH 12-5/v. 7. These directives can be likened to the Bavarian principles for 'military youth education during the war' of 1914. Moreover, they were replaced on 24 May 1934 by Blomberg's 'Directives for the education and physical training of German males outside the Wehrmacht', i.e. from the age of 14 to military service, BA-MA RH 15-5/v. 11. See Hölter, *Die Wehrerziehung*, 463–72.



as the supreme patriotic duty and a matter of honour'.<sup>53</sup> In the field of 'physical training at school' nothing much however happened at first.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the Reichswehr's desire for a uniform concept on the conduct of warfare was for a long time not achievable. From 1928, however, a politico-military realignment was introduced and completed under the Reichswehr minister Groener. The claim to sole responsibility for all questions of national defence was now abandoned, and the right of the political leadership to control the development and deployment of the Reichswehr was accepted in principle.<sup>55</sup> Groener's rejection of the Reichswehr's traditional military policy caused 'considerable irritation in the national conservative camp',<sup>56</sup> especially in the active and reserve officer corps. As the Ulm officers were seeking contact with the so-called national camp, the Reichswehr minister found himself compelled to issue an order justifying his endeavours towards an integration of the armed services in the republican state, but against a politicization of the troops. In his 'pastoral letter' to the commanding officers of the Reichswehr, dated 22 January 1930, Groener on the one hand invoked the 'idea of the state', while on the other warning against descending into the squabble between the parties and 'taking sides' themselves. The Reichswehr had to seek its path between the two extremes – Communism and National Socialism.

It is the sacred task of the Wehrmacht to prevent the split between classes and parties from ever widening into suicidal civil war . . . To serve the state, to save and maintain it, far from all party politics, against the enormous external pressure and the insane internal squabbles – that is our only goal . . . A united, ranks-closed, supra-party Reichswehr is the Reich's most trenchant and most noble means of exerting power. Within itself the Wehrmacht must be welded together through obedience and trust. To the soldier his superiors personify the state. Anyone looking not to them, but to clamouring radicals, no matter where they stand, is a menace and will fail at the hour of decision.<sup>57</sup>

Groener, however, went beyond issuing this order. On 24 February 1930 he once again informed the Reichswehr, both army and navy, about the National Socialist movement, its origins and development, and its attitude towards the state and the Wehrmacht. As the Reichswehr minister was of the opinion that Hitler was showing a tendency to 'stir up the members of the Reichswehr

<sup>53</sup> Gamm, *Führung und Verführung*, 73–8; in 1935 the Party published a relevant study by Helmut Stellrecht, 'Soldatentum und Jugendertüchtigung'; see Kersting, *Militär und Jugend im NS-Staat*; Hauptert and Schäfer, *Jugend zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*; Keim, *Erziehung*, ii.

<sup>54</sup> The sceptical report of the responsible Reich official, 22 Nov. 1935, BA NS 12/v. 1313.

<sup>55</sup> See Deist, 'Auf dem Wege zur ideologisierten Kriegführung', 401ff.; Citino, *The Path to Blitzkrieg*, 148ff.

<sup>56</sup> Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener*, 219; see Schwarzmüller, *Zwischen Kaiser und 'Führer'*, 224ff.

<sup>57</sup> Schüddekopf, *Das Heer und die Republik*, 260ff.; *Grundzüge der deutschen Militärgeschichte*, ii. 272ff.; see Hürter, *Wilhelm Groener*, 229–30.



against the state, inciting them to disobedience towards the prohibition of political activity imposed on it by the Reichswehr Act of 23 March 1921, and encouraging it to support the national revolutionary aims of the National Socialist movement', he qualified the NSDAP's wooing of the Reichswehr as just as 'disruptive' as the activities of the Communist Party. 'Their radical fundamental objectives are the same: via revolution to dictatorship.'<sup>58</sup> This part of Groener's policy, trying as it did to steer a middle course between National Socialism and Communism, found supporters in the Reichswehr such as Maj. Walter Model: 'It remains important that the state should be able, with ever greater authority, to prevent derailments into radicalism.' Other officers criticized the over-generalized equating of the NSDAP with the KPD.<sup>59</sup>

One of these 'radical clamourers', who, in Groener's opinion, pretended to be the sole representative of 'the truly national idea', was the leader of the National Socialists, Adolf Hitler. In June 1930 he reacted with the article in the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* mentioned earlier. In this Hitler accused the 'cunning gentlemen of the present-day Reichswehr ministry' of making concessions to the Marxist-pacifist-democratic section of our people and thereby abandoning the warlike purpose of the Reichswehr and turning it into a 'republican democratic parliamentary guard'. In spite of his low opinion of the 'moral qualities' of the 'mercenary army', Hitler had a high opinion of the 'technical training value' of the Reichswehr as the framework for a future people's army.<sup>60</sup>

At any rate, the 'radical clamourers', the National Socialists and Communists, emerged victorious from the Reichstag elections of September 1930, becoming the second and third strongest party after the Social Democrats. Thus confirmed by the public, Hitler was able, as a witness in the Reich Court in Leipzig, to declare proudly that nothing was further from his mind than the disintegration of the Reichswehr. If, however, his political movement were one day to have taken power in the state by legal means, then he would see to it that the Reichswehr once more became a 'great German people's army' because it was 'the most important instrument for the restoration of the German state'. He wanted 'the fatherland to be healthy', and had but one wish—for the Reichswehr, 'like the German people, to absorb within itself the new spirit, *our spirit*'.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Groener personally decorated soldiers for 'successful repulse of radical subversive attacks' (the so-called Watch Order of 14 Mar. 1930), BA-MA RH 46/361a. A little later Groener prohibited any official or unofficial participation of Reichswehr members at events 'at which also National Socialists appear in uniform or swastika flags are displayed' (10 Apr. 1930), BA-MA RM 21/105. See also the comprehensive reports about the 'right movement' of April and December 1927, sgd. by Schleicher, BA-MA RM 8/49, as well as Groener's order of 29 Nov. 1929, BA-MA RM 92/5361.

<sup>59</sup> Letter dated 5 Aug. 1930, quoted from Ludewig, 'Stationen', 74 n. 28. See Stein, *Feldmarschall Walter Model*. The opposite view is referred to by Heinrich von Vietinghoff, 'Reichswehr und Nationalsozialismus vor 1933', 29, BA-MA N 574/24.

<sup>60</sup> Hitler, 'Reichswehr und deutsche Politik', 6–7. This article was reprinted again in 1944 in issue 1 of *Militärwissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift*, new series, and can now be found in Domarus, *Reden*, i. 25 (not in English).

<sup>61</sup> Declaration of 25 Sept. 1930, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 156; for the positive effect of this declaration on the Reichswehr see Liebmann-Aufzeichnung of 25 Oct. 1930, BA-MA MSg 1/1668.

Even though Groener's appeal of January 1930 failed to achieve the desired result, and even though the Leipzig trial of the Ulm artillery officers Hans Ludin, Richard Scheringer, and Hans Friedrich Wendt further deepened the crisis of confidence between the minister and sections of the officer corps, the army leadership did not waver from its established line on education, and in 1931 issued an appropriate manual for the education of the troops.<sup>62</sup> This had been drafted by Maj. Erich Marcks, the future press chief of the chancellors Papen and Schleicher. Very much in the spirit of Groener's order it endeavoured, in fourteen pages, to blend the idea of the state and service to the fatherland. Marcks made it clear that even though, because of its imposed limitations, the Reichswehr could not be a 'powerful instrument of external policy', it nevertheless cooperated in 'leading the nation towards a vital future'. The Reichswehr could indeed 'always only be a tool and not the exponent of policy'. Although the Reichswehr stood above the parties, anyone attacking the state and its constitution was 'its enemy, regardless of who it was . . . Civil war is the end of the nation.' The Reichswehr had the 'noble task of demonstrating to the German nation in its economic and spiritual depression and its profound political division that it is possible, above all discord and clash of interests, to devote its work and life to one idea alone—the idea of the German state—and to serve it with readiness for sacrifice, fulfilment of duty, and self-discipline'.

There may be some doubt on whether the highflown language of the manual actually made it easier to instruct what Groener called an 'intelligent and lively youth' on the relationship between state and Wehrmacht. The guidelines for training in the army of 28 January 1933, which replaced those of August 1930, were more specific. Considering that the 'sacrifice of life' was made by a soldier 'willingly and gladly' only if he loved his fatherland above all else, 'patriotic education' was to form the basis of his mental training.<sup>63</sup> The naval leadership similarly did not try to lead the young intake of officers towards the Weimar Republic. Greater emphasis was placed instead on the role of the fighting forces as 'the foundation and corner stone' of any state order and any state life.<sup>64</sup>

Not until the autumn of 1931 did the Reichswehr leadership begin to rethink its assessment of Hitler's person and his movement. Following a sounding out of the territory by Schleicher, the chief of the ministerial office, on 29 October, the Reichswehr minister met the leader of the NSDAP on 6 January. After it, Groener described Hitler's intentions and objectives as good. He found himself able to agree with many of his ideas. It was important for the 'movement to get into the right channels'. Groener was willing to 'support'

<sup>62</sup> See the conference of the heads of the army command of 24 Apr. 1931, BA-MA, MSg 1/1668; *Richtlinien für den Unterricht im Heere*, T.II, Leitfaden für Erziehung und Unterricht, issued by the RWM, Heeresleitung, I. Leitgedanken, T.A., Staat und Wehrmacht, Berlin, 1931, BA, R 43 I/688 and BA-MA, RH 12-1/91. Repr. in extract in *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, 251 ff., and *Grundzüge der deutschen Militärgeschichte*, ii, 269 ff.

<sup>63</sup> BA-MA, RH 12-5/v. 7.

<sup>64</sup> See Rahn, 'Die Ausbildung zum Marineoffizier', 126 ff.

all Hitler's endeavours to 'integrate himself in the political life' of the Weimar republic. As a person, too, Groener had gained the 'best' impression of Hitler. Admittedly, he was a 'dreamer, full of enthusiasm and volcanic force', but he was clearly determined to 'extirpate revolutionary ideas' within his movement. Nevertheless, Groener showed his hard side at the commanding officers' conference on 11 and 12 January 1932. 'There'll be no civil war! Anyone raising his head will be beaten down with extreme brutality (not just severity). Whoever he may be!'<sup>65</sup>

Ideological warfare in pre-1933 Germany also included influencing of the public mind through the universities. Although there was a scholarly examination of the phenomenon 'war' in research and teaching, it was, in the spirit of 'military science' and of the demands of the military, to serve the militarization of Germany. The efforts of the *Truppenamt* in February/March 1924, to 'promote the national and military education of our young people in school and university' and, by using already 'pro-military' circles, to foster a positive attitude of the entire nation towards the military mindset, were only patchily realized in the Weimar Republic of the 1920s.

At the beginning of 1930 the director of the German Army Library, Josef Klefeker, started a new initiative. Though, because of the limitations of the Versailles treaty, Germany no longer enjoyed 'practical leadership in military matters', it should at least strive for 'spiritual leadership in the military sciences'. Seeing that the Reichswehr, overloaded as it was with immediate practical tasks, attached no importance to purely scholarly research, some different institution, Klefeker argued, should, 'from a high scholarly point of view', initiate and conduct research in this extensive and significant field. Starting from a provisional private association for military science research, the development should aim at a 'Reich research institute for military studies' within the framework of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Gesellschaft, similar to the Institute for Recent History that already existed.<sup>66</sup>

Klefeker's initiative fell on fertile soil in Germany. On 21 January 1931 the *Wehrwissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (Wewia) constituted itself in Berlin; its chairman initially was Maj.-Gen. (retd.) Karl Christoph Böhme, and its secretary Dr Klefeker.<sup>67</sup> As a 'free scholarly, and hence non-political, association of German military scholars' it intended not only to clarify views on the war of the future and encourage and promote the coming together of persons working in the field of military sciences, but also to attain for military science the position within the framework of other sciences that its importance warranted.<sup>68</sup> To this purpose Chairs of Military Science were to be established at German universities.

<sup>65</sup> Liebmann notes, BA-MA MSg 1/1668; see *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648 bis 1939*, pt. VI, 153–4; Schüddekopf, *Das Heer und die Republik*, 327 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Circular and supplement of 6 Jan. 1930, BA NL 15/432. The Deutsche Heeresbücherei had the subtitle of 'Reichsbibliothek für Wehrwissenschaften' from the summer of 1928 onwards.

<sup>67</sup> Klefeker's letter dated 7 Dec. 1931, BA NL 15/432.

<sup>68</sup> Statutes of the Wehrwissenschaftlichen Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Wewia), 18 June 1932, BA NL 15/432.

While outwardly showing reticence, the Reichswehr ministry spoke a clear language internally. The practice of military science and the militarization of Germany were closely connected. Wewia was a camouflage organization of the Reichswehr, in both factual and financial matters. In a secret letter the army leadership urged the military district and group headquarters, as well as the naval leadership, to support university studies of military science. To that end a Chair of Military History was to be established. 'Within the framework of military history, soon to be replaced by "military science", it will be possible to deal with other than purely historical tasks.' The army leadership realized that a 'swift and effective promotion' of military science within the framework of other Chairs as well was a 'question of money' because not all teachers would 'go to that trouble for patriotic reasons' alone. For that reason cash 'subsidies for research purposes' should be provided. These and all other contacts with the universities were to be through Wewia. 'There must be no hint of any part being played by the Wehrmacht.'<sup>69</sup>

Nearly two years after its establishment, Wewia was still involved in clarifying the concept of 'military sciences' and in the training of an 'educated youth, thinking on uniform lines in military matters'.<sup>70</sup> Although Wewia welcomed the fact that the 'German revolution' had created the best possible conditions for the 'propagation of a healthy politico-military will' among the broad public, there were strongly divergent views among the registered and corresponding members of Wewia on 'how teaching in the universities could, in practice, be switched from liberalist pacifist tracks in the new pro-military direction'. To this end Wewia on 28 June 1933 decided to dissolve.

Soon thereafter, 'attracting valuable resources', the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wehrpolitik und Wehrwissenschaften* was newly established.<sup>71</sup> Now the Reichswehr ministry was able openly to join as a corporation; after October 1933 it posted five general staff officers to the universities of Berlin, Breslau, Frankfurt-am-Main, Cologne, and Königsberg in order to lecture there on military policy.<sup>72</sup> In a series of lectures on military science and military policy

<sup>69</sup> The letter by the chief of the army directorate No. 105/31, 16 Feb. 1931, concerning 'Wehrhaftmachung und Wehrwissenschaften', was drafted by the general headquarters office and signed by its chief, Lt.-Gen. Wilhelm Adam, ppa. BA-MA RH 12-1/69. See also Adam's report of 24 July 1931 on support for the military idea among the student body, BA-MA RH 8/v. 1368, and letter from Wewia to the Reichswehr ministry, 20 Feb. 1933, BA-MA NL 15/432, as well as Oskar Ritter von Niedermayr, 'Wehrmacht und Hochschule' in *Deutschlands Erneuerung*, 24 (1940), 1, 8-12.

<sup>70</sup> Circular of the new chairman of Wewia, Lt.-Gen. (retd.) Friedrich von Cochenhausen, 24 Nov. 1932, BA NL 15/432. For Professor Banse of Braunschweig, for example, military science was 'the spiritual expression of a nation's willingness to be militarized and a concept of heroic sentiment', Banse, *Germany, Prepare for War*, 406. Not until 1939/40 did the conceptual clarification process reach a certain end with Linnebach, *Die Wehrwissenschaften*, and in Oestreich's article 'Vom Wesen der Wehrgeschichte'. On the paths and false paths taken by German military historiography see Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur*, 296-7; Kroener, 'Alle Geschichte ist Wehrgeschichte'.

<sup>71</sup> Circular of the president Von Cochenhausen, 14 July 1933, BA NL 15/432. The honorary presidency was assumed by the Reich governor of Bavaria and head of the military policy department of the NSDAP, Lt.-Gen. (retd.) Franz Ritter von Epp. See Messerschmidt, 'Bildung und Erziehung', 210.

<sup>72</sup> Letter of the Reichswehr minister, *Truppenamt*, T 4 II, 21 Aug. 1933, BA-MA R 12-2/25, or minute of 18 July 1933, 8-9. By 1937 at the latest there was a separate 'Wissenschaften'

at the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin the speaker emphasized that 'military-oriented intellectual work' was the most noble task of the German universities.<sup>73</sup> As ideological and organizational control of the militarization of the broad masses had been assumed by the NSDAP, the Reichswehr now focused on its real tasks—training and educating the soldiers. After April 1933 this meant politicizing them. The Reichswehr's official 'non-political character' and its avoidance of 'party squabbles' were now definitely things of the past.

section in the RKM under Ministerialrat Prof. Dr Schumann, which concerned itself with research, universities, and military sciences and maintained relations with the relevant ministry. In October 1938 the section and its head were raised in rank and attached to the General Wehrmacht Office (AWA). On the wartime activities of the universities see Hausmann, *Deutsche Geisteswissenschaft*, and Szöllösi-Janze, *Fritz Haber*.

<sup>73</sup> This series of lectures was published in 1934 in Berlin under the title 'Wehrgeistige Erziehung'. The identities of the organizer and speaker are unknown.

## II. The Politicization of the Reichswehr/Wehrmacht

THE relationship between National Socialism and Wehrmacht after 30 January 1933 was already a matter of concern to people at the time. While the French ambassador in Berlin, André François-Poncet, asked himself in 1934 whether the Party or the army was playing the leading part in the new state, and while Joseph Goebbels in 1937 feared that the Wehrmacht was becoming 'a state within the state',<sup>1</sup> Col. Walter von Reichenau pointed out, on the very day he took on the post of head of the ministerial office in the Reichswehr ministry, that the Wehrmacht had never been more identical with the state than on 30 January 1933.<sup>2</sup> From the *historical* perspective the so-called seizure of power by Adolf Hitler represented *no* 'decisive turning point' in the history of the Wehrmacht.<sup>3</sup>

In 1933 continuity and joy at the change of government prevailed. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lt.-Gen. Beck welcomed the 'political reversal' as 'the first great ray of light since 1918'.<sup>4</sup> Anyway, why should the Reichswehr see itself as a bulwark against National Socialism when the new Reich chancellor and 'Führer' of the NSDAP promised to implement all those objectives striven for in the thinking and actions of many representatives of the Reichswehr leadership during the unloved Weimar republic – authoritarian leadership, shedding the 'fetters of Versailles', creating a people's army, and militarizing society?

It was Werner von Blomberg who in November 1945 accused his comrades of 'purpose-linked oblivion' when they no longer wished to remember the 'fulfilments' of the years 1933 to 1938 that had 'attracted' them to Hitler.<sup>5</sup> Vice-Adm. (retd.) Eberhard Weichold made the same point. He considered National Socialism more deeply anchored in the German people than many Germans now wished to admit.<sup>6</sup> However, it was not just the military top brass who welcomed Hitler's regime as a way out of the calamities of Weimar. Thus Lt.-Col. Gotthard Heinrici, departmental head in the General Army Office (AHA), hoped that one would at last now get 'out of the Marxist-Jewish mess'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt.1, iv, 28 Oct. 1937. Goebbels disliked the idea of the Wehrmacht wanting to make its own propaganda.

<sup>2</sup> Sauer, *Die Mobilmachung*, 53; see Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 49–56.

<sup>3</sup> Thus in contrast to Salewski, *Die bewaffnete Macht*, 13; Winkler, *Die Machtübertragung*, 27, and Bessel, 'The Nazi Capture of Power'.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 17 Mar. 1933, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 151.

<sup>5</sup> Manuscript reminiscences, BA-MA N 52/7, fos. 2–3. Blomberg was probably reacting to the first 'General Staff memorandum'. See *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, i, 671ff.

<sup>6</sup> Attitude towards National Socialism, 29 Sept. 1945, BA-MA N 316/v. 68

<sup>7</sup> Letter to his parents, dated 17 Feb. 1933, quoted from Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 22; see the attitude of Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 103, 120, 123, 146.



Contrary to François-Poncet's assessment, the Reichswehr was not striving for the dominant position in the new state,<sup>8</sup> but was satisfied that everything politically possible was being done for it. Blomberg and his closest collaborator Reichenau were proceeding from a double task for the Reichswehr: purely military rearmament and, simultaneously, the political introduction of the fighting forces into the 'revolutionary National Socialist state order'.<sup>9</sup> In the sphere of the political alignment of the troops and their understanding of their role the Reichswehr, after 1933, was not 'politically aligned' by the Party from outside, but 'programmed' for its world view from within. Even so, Reichenau's remark just quoted described the objective aimed at rather than the reality of 1933, even though Grand Adm. Raeder subsequently boasted that the education in the navy had, 'already during the system era', aimed at an inner attitude that, in 1933, had 'by itself resulted in a truly National Socialist attitude'.<sup>10</sup>

The Hitler-Blomberg alliance was based on the much-invoked spiritual and material 'remilitarization of Germany'. Since operations in a future industrialized war were seen as only *one* component, the resuscitation of the whole nation's 'military spirit', buried by revolution and democracy, was just as important as the rearmament proper of the Reichswehr.<sup>11</sup> Within the course of a few weeks a loyal collaboration developed between the Reich chancellor and the Reichswehr minister with regard to 'internal education' (Hitler, 6 July 1933) of Germans in and out of uniform. After the beginning of February 1933, when Hitler had assured the Reichswehr leadership, in both intimate and wider circles, that he would do everything for its material rearmament and that this 'militarization' would be underpinned ideologically by his movement's 'educational work' and the 'extermination of Marxism among the public at large', the Reichswehr in return gave up its emergency rights under Article 48, paragraph 2 of the Weimar constitution as well as its claim to leadership in the militarization of society. It deliberately kept aloof from the 'domestic policy struggle' and concentrated on its proper task—the defence of the Reich's territory against external enemies as well as 'weapons training and education of the soldier'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Blomberg's position was overrated in England as well. The *Newcastle Chronicle* of 5 Aug. 1937 described him as the man who wielded the greatest power in Germany because he had the German army under his control. See Strachan, 'Die Vorstellungen der Anglo-Amerikaner'.

<sup>9</sup> BA-MA MSG 1/1238.

<sup>10</sup> Salewski, *Von Raeder zu Dönitz*, 144.

<sup>11</sup> See Vogelsang, 'Hitlers Brief an Reichenau', 434–7; Deist, 'Auf dem Wege zur ideologisierten Kriegführung', 391; Messerschmidt, 'Den Krieg wieder fühlbar machen'; Heider, 'Der totale Krieg', as well as Eduard Spranger's lecture on 'Seelische Faktoren im Kriege' at the Reich war ministry on 21 Nov. 1935, BA-MA RM 8/1594, and Pintschovius, *Die seelische Widerstandskraft*. Deliberately castigating the pacifist attitude of the Oxford students, Winston Churchill exaggerated the military enthusiasm of German youth when, on 17 Feb. 1933, he publicly declared: 'I think of Germany, with its splendid clear-eyed youth marching forward on all the roads of the Reich singing their ancient songs, demanding to be conscripted into an army, eagerly seeking the most terrible weapons of war, burning to suffer and die for their fatherland,' repr. in Gilbert, *Finest Hour*, 456.

<sup>12</sup> Blomberg's address of 23 Feb. 1933 and his order of 14 Mar. 1933, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 160–1; see Blomberg's provisional directives of 22 July 1935 on the 'employment of the Wehrmacht in the Reich territory in the event of internal unrest and public emergencies', BA-MA RM 92/5391.



The division of labour between Blomberg and Hitler in the area of Germany's *ideological* rearmament meant that the NSDAP took over the sector of 'military education of the German nation'. Propaganda, schooling, and premilitary education in peacetime were to bring about a 'general refocusing of all thinking' about the need for a future war.<sup>13</sup> The Reichswehr leadership concentrated on politicizing the troops, steering them towards National Socialism and their changed role in the new Germany. Whereas in his first Order of the Day 'to the Wehrmacht' on 31 January 1933 Blomberg had still expressed his determination to preserve the Reichswehr as a 'supra-party instrument of power' for the state, on 11 April 1933 he ordered the forces to go along with the national movement.

This was not a tactical change, but one based on the division of labour between the NSDAP and the Reichswehr, as confirmed by what Blomberg told the commanding officers' conference on 1 June 1933 in Bad Wildungen. Against the background of the Enabling Act sanctioned by him in cabinet, he described it as 'fortunate' that the Party would 'soon' attain 'the totality it was striving for'. The 'non-political existence' of the Reichswehr was over. The task now was for it 'to serve the national movement with all dedication'.<sup>14</sup> Blomberg was fully aware that Hitler's 'seizure of power' was not a normal change of government from the Weimar years, but represented a 'fundamental change in the views and will of the entire nation, and the realization of a new view of the world'.

The Reichswehr minister was anxious to stress the great congruence of this new 'German'—and not merely National Socialist—philosophy with the 'best principles of German soldiering': 'Unassailable leadership, merger of the individual with the cause, and sacrifice' were also the 'main pillars of soldierly thinking . . . Believe me, there has never been a statesman to give the German Wehrmacht such a measure of development opportunities as Reich chancellor Adolf Hitler.'<sup>15</sup> Because he did not see the position of the Reichswehr as threatened in the nascent 'new Germany', Blomberg toned down the concern or jealousy some soldiers felt vis-à-vis the SA.

With this attitude the military leadership was objectively supporting Hitler in the consolidation of his rule. During the Party's first wave of terror the Reichswehr stood at the ready. Yet to interpret its 'wait-and-see attitude' as an 'internal function' within the meaning of the regime would be to underestimate the position

<sup>13</sup> Blomberg's letter to Hess, dated 6 Jan. 1938, concerning the work plan of the NSDAP in the framework of defence of the Reich, BA-MA RH 2/990b. On the restructuring and development of National Socialist propaganda after 1933 see Sösemann, 'Propaganda', 123 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Sösemann, 'Propaganda', 161. The young officer Hans Meier-Welcker, in a letter to his comrade Ernst Kaether dated 2 July 1933, mentioned that the totality of National Socialism could no longer be doubted. 'We all belong to it, just as every Italian working for his fatherland is a fascist today. The more comprehensive National Socialism becomes in Germany, the better it will be for all of us.' See Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 150.

<sup>15</sup> Blomberg's address to officers of the 6th Division on 15 Sept. 1933, BA-MA RH 37/808; see also the putting into effect of Blomberg's intentions by the commander of the 5th Division, Gen. Curt Liebmann, on 5 Oct. 1933, BA-MA MSg 1/1668; see also Col. Heinrich's assessment of 7 July 1933, repr. in Heinrich, *Ein deutscher General*, 25.

of Hitler and the NSDAP in 1933/4.<sup>16</sup> If there were problems about National Socialism's totalitarian claim and the new political conditions in Germany, then these existed only at the lower level of the Reichswehr, and even there only in the formal sphere.

Parallel with the establishment of a 300,000-strong army, as decided in December 1933, the Reichswehr leadership was concerned about the 'ideological inculcation' in all servicemen of the 'guiding ideas of the National Socialist state'. That it took the ideological schooling more seriously 'than many who only talked about it' was made clear by Maj. Hermann Foertsch, the officer responsible for this in the home affairs department in the Wehrmacht Office, in an address to the Ic (intelligence) officers of corps and station commands on 17 April 1934.<sup>17</sup> Its direction was defined in a basic instruction by Blomberg. In harmony with the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* ideology the minister on 24 May 1934 urged officers to make 'the idea of the common blood and destiny of all Germans' the basis of their work in the armed services. 'The ideas of our soldiery and of National Socialism', he said, 'stem from the same experience of the Great War.'<sup>18</sup>

By way of official background for the prescribed officers' 'instruction on political issues of the day', guidelines were published from April 1934 onwards, once or twice a month.<sup>19</sup> Although these were largely a homage to 'Hitlerism' and although they reported 'issues of the day' such as the murders of the SA leaders, they also explained ideological topics such as 'race policy' and the 'Jewish question'.<sup>20</sup>

Going beyond internal schooling, specifically directed Wehrmacht propaganda was to 'capture and influence' young people. Targeted items in the daily press and on radio<sup>21</sup> skilfully managed to fuse the myth of the First World War front-line fighter with National Socialism's ideology of the people's community,<sup>22</sup> to glorify Hitler's personal goals as a national revolution, and to portray the serviceman as the protagonist of the state-supporting ideology.

<sup>16</sup> Thus in contrast to Kern, *Die innere Funktion der Wehrmacht*.

<sup>17</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 56. The ministerial office in the Reichswehr ministry was renamed the Wehrmacht office (*Wehrmachtamt*) on 12 Feb. 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 164–5. This idea was repeated by Blomberg in his introduction to *Was wir vom Weltkrieg nicht wissen*, intended as a 'book for the people'. A second edition appeared in 1938.

<sup>19</sup> Blomberg's order of 4 Apr. 1934. Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 168. See Messerschmidt, 'Bildung und Erziehung', 203–4, and Salewski, 'Die bewaffnete Macht', 52 ff. A year later Blomberg stressed the official character of the guidelines, whose content was determined and approved by him. In January 1935 the army C-in-C ruled that only superior officers were allowed to take on the 'ideological instruction' of the troops.

<sup>20</sup> BA-MA RWD 12/30, 1 Aug. and 1 Sept. 1937 respectively. National Socialist instruction had already begun at the army's specialized schools. Valentin Beyer's book, *Das neue Deutschland im Werden*, intended as a building block for this, did not appear until 1935.

<sup>21</sup> See *Militär-Wochenblatt* of 18 Aug. and 18 Dec. 1933, the propaganda directive of 21 Nov. 1933, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 164 ff., and Blomberg's article 'Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich' on 28 June 1934 in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, repr. in Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 505.

<sup>22</sup> See Thamer, 'Volksgemeinschaft', 380 ff.; Janka, *Die braune Gesellschaft*, 326.

The ideal of *one* nation as an 'indissoluble community of life and struggle' certainly contributed to strengthening the patriotic *Wir-Gefühl* (we-awareness) of the German servicemen. However, it also had an excluding effect. Only 'Aryans' had a future in National Socialist Germany. It was of no avail that the Reich League of Jewish Front-line Soldiers on 23 March 1934 protested to Hindenburg at the 'young Jewish generation' being excluded 'from service in the German Wehrmacht, the highest honourable duty and the highest honourable right in our traditional German homeland'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time as the Reichswehr was expelling its Jewish soldiers towards the end of February 1934,<sup>24</sup> Hitler once more confirmed that it was, and would remain, the nation's only bearer of arms.<sup>25</sup> The murderous elimination of the SA leadership in the summer of 1934 made it clear once and for all that the Reichswehr—and not the SA militia—was to form the core of the future people's army based on universal conscription. The so-called Röhm coup d'état, however, did not represent a real turning point in the history of the Reichswehr, nor did the repeated formal avowal by Hitler, at the Reich Party rally of 1934, that the Reichswehr was, alongside the Party, the second pillar of the state.

The hurried swearing-in of the Reichswehr to Hitler after the death of Reich president Hindenburg at the beginning of August 1934 is also often overstressed in the literature. This decision of the Reichswehr became important only when, after Blomberg's dismissal in February 1938, the new 'Führer and Reich chancellor' began to exercise command over the Wehrmacht also 'directly and personally'. The official summing-up of the Reichswehr minister 'after the significant events of the summer' of 1934 was: 'Victory and consolidation of the National Socialist governmental power . . . Thus Germany is conquered. Security through the Wehrmacht.'<sup>26</sup>

The turning point in the military constitution of National Socialist Germany came only with the reintroduction of universal conscription in the spring of 1935. It was not only noisily hailed in the media by Blomberg and Reichenau as a 'bounden duty' of German youth and, for instance in Munich, enthusiastically celebrated.<sup>27</sup> The former army commander-in-chief Gen. Wilhelm Heye

<sup>23</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 73; see *Deutsche jüdische Soldaten*, 1, 49; or Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*, 84. The Jewish youth organizations were also precluded from military sport.

<sup>24</sup> See Messerschmidt, *Juden im preußisch-deutschen Heer*, 115; Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 183ff.; Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*, 80ff.; BA-MA RW 6/v. 13. A year later the Japanese navy also discovered the 'Jewish question' and the 'great dangers' threatening Japan from 'Jewish elements' in a war with the USA, 'chiefly in the propaganda area'. For that reason the German naval attaché in Tokyo was asked for 'suitable enlightening and propaganda material'. BA-MA RM 11/69, 13 May 1935.

<sup>25</sup> Hitler's address to the heads of Reichswehr and SA on 28 Feb. 1934, repr. in Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 98–9. See Fallois, *Kalkül und Illusion*, 117ff. and Förster, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*.

<sup>26</sup> Liebmann notes, generals' conference held on 9 Oct. 1934, BA-MA MSg 1/1668.

<sup>27</sup> See Blomberg's appeal to German youth of 22 Mar. 1935 and Reichenau's article 'Der Soldat des Dritten Reiches', BA-MA MSg 1/1238, 70–4. The phrase in the Military Law of 21 May 1935, 'Military service is honourable service to the German people' had previously been used, word for word, by Werner Frhr von Fritsch, C-in-C of the army, on 14 June 1934, BA-MA RH 39/786. On the 'enormous enthusiasm' in Munich on 17 Mar. 1935 see *Deutschland-Berichte*, vol. 1935, 279.

was also delighted: 'Adolf Hitler has given us the most ideal soldierly state – a united *German Wehrmacht* without territorial boundaries and with a unified army, a unified *Luftwaffe*, and a unified navy.'<sup>28</sup> The profile of the new *Wehrmacht* as the 'arms-bearer and soldierly school of the German nation' (21 May 1935) also marked a decisive change for education in the armed forces. The process of structural change was accompanied by manifold efforts on the part of the *Wehrmacht* leadership and individual commanders. They were to imbue their troops with a new community spirit and identity. Army and people, ideology and weapons, tradition and a new start were to be bound one to the other. Precisely because creating a community of nation, *Wehrmacht*, and Party under a racial aegis represented something new in German history, the military deliberately reached back to the myth of the Prussian army reform in 1806 and the mythical front-line spirit of the First World War. Just as then, it was now necessary to tread new ways in training and education, with priority being given to enhancing the inner value of the forces.<sup>29</sup>

In his basic order of 16 April 1935 Blomberg also referred to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and his directive, then a year old, of being 'a national and social melting-pot for raising a new kind of German'. The *Reichswehr* minister again declared the *Wehrmacht* to be the 'great school educating the nation'. Military service was defined as the 'final and highest' phase in the education of a young German, from parental home through school, Hitler Youth, and labour service. The last named saw itself as an indispensable constituent of National Socialist people's education'.<sup>30</sup> The educational goal of the *Wehrmacht* was not only the thoroughly trained fighter and 'master of his weapons, but also a man conscious of his ethnic background and his general duties towards the state'.<sup>31</sup>

This dual task was not uncontroversial in the *Wehrmacht*. Thus an anonymous author in *Militär-Wochenblatt* demanded that general education be taken out again, with training confined to producing an 'acting and thinking soldier for tomorrow's war', that is to say to field training.<sup>32</sup> As the commander-in-chief of the army explained to his officers, what mattered to the Reich war minister was not that 'soldiers be turned into National Socialists . . . but National Socialists into soldiers'.<sup>33</sup> Blomberg's order of 18 December 1934 on

<sup>28</sup> *Lebenserinnerungen*, ii, BA-MA N 18/4. This was not exactly true, since the Rhineland was still demilitarized. See Schwarzmüller, *Zwischen Kaiser und 'Führer'*, 308–9; Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 25; François-Poncet, *The Fateful Years*.

<sup>29</sup> Reichenau's conference with his commanders in Munich on 2 Dec. 1935, BA-MA RH 26–7/369.

<sup>30</sup> See Patel, *Soldaten der Arbeit*, 51, and Jonas, *Verherrlichung*.

<sup>31</sup> *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 101. See Art. 2 of the Military Law of 21 May 1935. This educational route was also publicly advocated by Hitler in Nuremberg on 13 and 15 Sept. 1935, repr. in Domarus, *Reden*, ii, 533–4. On 18 Mar. 1935 appropriate 'Directives for the education and training' of the army had been issued. Blomberg's order was to be notified and explained to the army's leaders, and officers under them, once every three months. See Chef der Heeresleitung, 3 May 1935, BA-MA RH 39/130; Nittner, 'Menschenführung'.

<sup>32</sup> See the contradiction to this article in Simoneit, *Deutsches Soldatentum*, 294 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Liebmam notes on the commanding officers' conference of 18 Nov. 1935, BA-MA MSg 1/1668. See the implementation at division level in Munich, where this dictum was presented as Reichenau's or Hitler's view, BA-MA RH 26–7/369. On the question of leadership in

the duties of the young officer had already described the 'national-education task' of the Wehrmacht as just as important as purely military training.<sup>34</sup> This was no revolutionary innovation, as proved by the programmatical publication *Der Offizier als Erzieher des Volkes* of 1888. Part 1 of the army service manual, *Truppenführung*, in October 1933 likewise confirmed the officer's dual role as 'leader and educator'. 'Vital importance' was attributed to the 'maintenance of internal solidity and discipline of the troops' in time of war (§ 13).

However, the new armed forces—as the Reichswehr minister on 16 April 1935 pointed out, in obvious criticism of the old Reichswehr—must no longer lead a life of their own, but must set an example of 'German character and German nature' to the whole nation. Blomberg linked his educational dual objective with an appeal to the officers' duty of caring and comradeship, to make sure that militarily keen youngsters were not put off during their tough training by 'superficialities and outdated ideas of lording it over the lower ranks'.<sup>35</sup>

A mere six months later the psychological testing unit in military district VII (Munich) believed it had noticed a 'persuasive aligning effect' on the young officer cadets. This was due, according to the unit's head, Roth, to the 'structural change in public life and public opinion, in particular the enormous spiritual and ideological unification'. Because youth felt 'its awareness of life best characterized as "soldierly"', commanding officers would carry an even greater responsibility. This view was shared also by Maj.-Gen. Franz Halder, artillery commander for military district VII, who considered it essential that in the training of officer candidates their 'pleasure in military service and leadership was deliberately fostered, and demands on their own capacity for performance and sense of responsibility thereby systematically raised'.<sup>36</sup>

Blomberg's crucial order on the 'uniform political education and training' of the officer corps was issued, not entirely by accident, on 30 January 1936. In order to be able to fulfil their 'leadership task for people and state' the officers of all three Wehrmacht services must 'possess the National Socialist ideology in spiritual unanimity, as something of their own and an inner conviction'. So that they could acquire 'the ideology guiding German national and state life', the Reich war minister and commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht ruled that officers' colleges and academies of the army, navy, and Luftwaffe were to

the Reichswehr/Wehrmacht, uncritically and argued on a much too narrow basis, 'Hackl, Militärische Menschenführung'; Caspar, 'Ethische, politische und militärische Grundlagen'.

<sup>34</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 320–1. The loyal implementation of this order for the army by its chief, Gen. von Fritsch, on 21 Dec. 1934 is clear from *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 100; Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 165ff. See also a memorandum by Fritsch of 1 Feb. 1938, in which he emphasizes that the 'basis of our army today is and must be National Socialist', repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 245.

<sup>35</sup> The fact that training of the soldiers was tough is proved by the large number of suicides in the army, which Fritsch had addressed with the order of 30 Nov. 1934, BA-MA RH 39/786. As late as 1936/37, II AK (Stettin) recorded 49 attempted suicides, 17 of them 'with fatal result', former MA DDR (Potsdam, now BA-MA), R 14.02.01/134, fo. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Art.-Führer VII, Ia, of 17 Oct. 1935, BA-MA RH 37/735.

devote at least two hours a month to 'national political teaching'.<sup>37</sup> This was to be supplemented with talks by outside personalities. The schooling of the troops took place in the form of 'Instruction on political issues of the day', which had existed since 1933 and which was regulated after April 1934.

Responsibility for the 'political teaching and interpretation' lay solely with the military superior officers, i.e. company commanders. The Wehrmacht did not want political commissars on the Red Army model, nor patriotic instruction like that in 1917/18. Ideological *schooling* and theoretical discussion of ideological questions were also disapproved of. The starting point for the company commander's talks was to be the 'soldier's real life' and the 'unity and community of soldierly and National Socialist ideology'. The real objective of 'national political teaching' was to be not the soldier's deliberate participation in the German people's 'struggle for life', but his 'ultimate inner understanding and utmost psychological readiness to do his duty towards Führer and nation'. On 29 February 1938 the Reich war minister ordered that the teaching include also 'racial theory' and 'hereditary health matters'.

A few months later Hitler made clear the great importance he attached to a solid ideological grounding for all servicemen: 'Unless we succeed, within a very short time, in making the German Wehrmacht the foremost army in the world, in training, in the establishment of its formations, in equipment, and above all in ideological education, Germany will be lost!' In his view Germany was confronted by the 'tight-knit, authoritarian, ideologically based aggressive will' of Bolshevism. At that time, in August 1936, Hitler still spoke of the necessary '*warding off* of this danger', to which all other considerations had to yield as totally irrelevant.<sup>38</sup>

In order not to succumb immediately in the 'future war' for Germany's greatness—and on that point Hitler and the military leadership of 1936/7 were agreed—it was necessary, along with rearming the Wehrmacht, to accomplish 'the total mobilization of the nation' in peacetime. This was a priority task for state policy, a task for the NSDAP. The 'closely united will to war' of National Socialist Germany would have a direct positive effect on 'the inner striking power of the Wehrmacht'.<sup>39</sup> On 9 November 1936 Hitler, addressing

<sup>37</sup> Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, Doc. 21. See the lecture by Oberregierungsrat Dr Walther Kayser, the official in the *Inland* department responsible for national politics instruction, on 15 Oct. 1936 and its implementation directives in the Luftwaffe; see BA-MA RW 6/v. 56, or BA-MA RH 39/783. On the application and implementation in the Luftwaffe see Schmidt, 'Luftwaffen-Offizierausbildung', unpubl. doc., MGFA, Potsdam, 52–3, 116 ff., as well as directives for training at the air war academy (1938/9), BA-MA RL 2 II/164; for the Pz.Tr. and the war college at Wiener Neustadt in the summer of 1939 see the order of 28 Nov. 1936, BA-MA RH 39/160, as well as BA-MA H 81–6/1. An impression of political education at company level is provided by Rudolf Loibl's article in *Militärwochenblatt*, 'Wehrpropaganda in der Wehrmacht', 42 (1936), 1893–9. On the implementation of the Blomberg order at the war academy see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 219 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Treue, 'Denkschrift', 184–204 (emphasis added).  
<sup>39</sup> See the 13th and 14th meetings of the Reich Defence Committee of 19 Nov. 1936 and 21 Apr. 1937, BA-MA Wi/IF 5 560, ii, and statements by Lt.-Gen. Keitel and Col. Jodl. See Förster, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*.



the Party, prided himself on not having shattered the Reichswehr, but having made it the core of the 'new German people's army'. What mattered in the development phase of the new Wehrmacht was a fusion of national pride, dedication, readiness for sacrifice, a sense of fatherland and community, and character-forming in the National Socialist spirit and the Hitler myth. Training and cohesion of the forces still enjoyed priority over ideological bias.<sup>40</sup> As Hitler himself had declared: 'I am not concerned that the recruits coming in turn the soldiers into National Socialists, but that the army turns the National Socialists coming into it into soldiers.'<sup>41</sup> The prescribed cult of always thinking and feeling 'German' would make it easier for the radical toxins of National Socialism to permeate the minds of the soldiers.

However, it was not left at instructions and exhortations. On 12 January 1935 Blomberg, at a commanding officers' conference, threatened that 'those who could not fit in with the National Socialist ideology' would be removed from the Wehrmacht.<sup>42</sup> This aim was also emphatically supported by the army leadership against internal critics. Gen. Werner Freiherr von Fritsch, who rendered homage to Hitlerism, told the officer corps that Germany's future was, 'for better or worse', firmly linked to National Socialism. 'Anyone acting detrimentally against the National Socialist state is a criminal.'<sup>43</sup> Blomberg made the generals responsible for the following view becoming known throughout: 'For anyone, however outstanding a person he may be, who is unable to reconcile himself to the National Socialist state or the fact that the Wehrmacht is part of that state there is, after a certain period of grace that is still granted—no longer any place in the Wehrmacht.' The officer corps, in particular, should 'stand by the Führer with great loyalty of heart and mind'.<sup>44</sup>

This kind of call fell on fertile soil in the new Wehrmacht. Thus the commander of military district VII (Munich) declared: 'We are National Socialists, even without a Party card. The best, the most loyal, the most serious.'<sup>45</sup> On 2 March 1937 the commander of the 1st Panzer Division, Cavalry Gen. Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, made his views clear: 'With the National Socialist revolution our whole nation has begun, not only in appearance but in its

<sup>40</sup> After the war Weichs believed he remembered that until 1939 the officer corps was still left alone with regard to 'political propaganda'; quoted from Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 75 n. 199.

<sup>41</sup> Reichenau at the 7th Division commanding officers' conference in Munich on 2 Dec. 1935, BA-MA RH 26-7/369.

<sup>42</sup> Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 235; see also the instruction to reserve officers of 22 July 1935, BA-MA RW 4/v. 841; Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 384. Anyone 'maliciously resisting' the educational measures—including those in disciplinary detachments and Wehrmacht prisons—was sent to a concentration camp after completion of his sentence. Memorandum of the AHA of 12 Nov. 1938, in Imperial War Museum, London, M I (981/2). See Jahr, 'Militärjustiz', and Messerschmidt, *Wehrmachtjustiz*.

<sup>43</sup> Order of 19 Aug. 1935, BA-MA RH 2/v. 134.

<sup>44</sup> Liebmann notes, Blomberg at the conference of 9 Oct. 1934 and his comment on 12 Jan. 1935, BA-MA MSg 1/1668.

<sup>45</sup> Commanding officers' conference on 2 Dec. 1935, BA-MA RH 26-7/369.



mental attitude, to *march in step with the army.*' Here it was, the new militarized *Volksgemeinschaft!* 'In the new Wehrmacht a German people's army has arisen, one [rooted] in German ethnicity.' 'As a result the officer type of the past has to become a symbol and sovereign exponent of the German concept of life.' For specific educational work in the officer corps Weichs issued the following directives: '1. Hardness towards oneself; 2. Natural self-assurance; 3. Marked sense of honour; 4. Simple lifestyle; 5. Being German in one's innermost nature; 6. Insuperable love of nation, fatherland, and Führer.'<sup>46</sup>

A year later Maj.-Gen. Heinrici told recruits of the 16th Infantry Division: 'The principles according to which [the old army] lived and worked enabled our nation to defy a world of enemies through four long years. They are the same principles that our new Wehrmacht is striving to convey and that the National Socialist ideology, born of the spirit of soldierdom, is bringing ever closer to us!'<sup>47</sup>

Infantry Gen. Eugen Ritter von Schobert, commanding VII Army Corps, on the other hand wanted to promote the war-related training and education, i.e. the formation of soldiers 'of inner tenacity and outward composure', as well as their 'inner attachment to the struggle', more through 'practical leadership' and example rather than through instruction. '*Our supreme law says:* "Everything for the Führer, for Germany!" Under this banner the troops must become internally strong and unconditionally *hard* towards themselves . . . Under it they walk the clear road of duty, untroubled by even the less pleasant aspects of everyday happenings. These do not affect them. They do not stir up trouble, they are not grumblers. But successes in our nation's life, achieved by true German manly courage, inspire them all the more.'<sup>48</sup>

The ideal type of the German officer was characterized as follows by Artillery Gen. Friedrich Dollmann, commanding IX Army Corps, speaking to Party officials of Gau Kurhessen: 'What we are striving for is the firmly consolidated personality devoid of vanity, with assured demeanour but innerly modest, with a good general education, putting the principles of the National Socialist ideology into effect in his general attitude and lifestyle.' Decisive for 'internal consolidation' of an officer corps seen as wholly heterogeneous in its

<sup>46</sup> *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 103. This order met with the full agreement of the army C-in-C. See also the address by Maj.-Gen. von Vietinghoff of 24 May 1937 to Hitler Youth leaders in Weimar, former MA DDR (Potsdam, now BA-MA), W-03/112. He spoke as Blomberg's representative, also dealing with political education, since the Wehrmacht demanded 'as a matter of course that every officer and NCO personally explore National Socialist ideology ever more deeply, and make it totally his own'.

<sup>47</sup> Address on 27 Feb. 1938, quoted from Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 342 n. 48.

<sup>48</sup> Order of 2 July 1938, BA-MA RH 46/309. See Schobert's observations at the commanding officers' conference on 7 Mar. 1938 and his order on training of 4 Nov. 1938, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 108. For Lt.-Gen. Leo Freiherr von Schweppenburg a man and his character meant more than his having the desired knowledge, BA-MA N 254/35; this was merely repeating the tenor of the army training directives of 28 Jan. 1933: 'Character counts for more than intelligence.' In the RAD's assessment system it enjoyed priority over theoretical knowledge. See Hierl, *Erziehen und Führen*, 14.

National Socialist political attitude and ideology were, to Gen. Dollmann, not directives but the model provided by the commanding officers.<sup>49</sup>

Three years previously, Lt.-Gen. Oswald Lutz, inspector of motorized troops, had still seen the most noble task of the officer as promoting the 'spirit and the discipline' of the troops. The company commander must, within the shortest possible time, have his company behind him in 'blind obedience, strictest discipline, and absolute trust'.<sup>50</sup> The pride an officer felt upon having mastered this task emerges from a letter sent by a mildly intoxicated battery commander to his fiancée after a successful exercise:

Something like this is quite rare, and one experiences this magic in a state of soldierly trance that has not very much to do with reality. It is the eternally soldierly. It is timeless. – Highfalutin words, aren't they? . . . Because since then I know that the battery is *my* battery. There's nothing more beautiful for an officer, I believe. And when, after 30 years or more, the men think back, *these* nights they'll *never* forget . . . By trying to blot out hardships in their memory, and by setting up a few markers that will be a joy to look back on, I am conducting propaganda for the idea of being a soldier.<sup>51</sup>

Needless to say, there was also external propaganda for the new German soldiery, from official and authoritative quarters. As early as April 1934 Blomberg had suggested to the commanding officers that they step up publicity for the Wehrmacht. More than in the past it should emerge as 'the nation's sole bearer of arms, as systematically and reliably educated in the spirit of Hitler's government and in National Socialist thinking'.<sup>52</sup> The first personal contact between the press officers of the Wehrmacht services and the Goebbels ministry, to promote 'politico-military reporting' in the German press, took place on 18 January 1935.

In 1934 came the first publication of *Soldatentum: Zeitschrift für Wehrpsychologie, Wehrerziehung, Führerauslese*, produced by the Reichswehr ministry in order to preserve soldierly values for the educating of the German people, since there was as yet no general conscription. From 1935 onwards the army, navy, and Luftwaffe published separate 'Annuals'; this was followed a year later by the fortnightly *Die Wehrmacht*. After 1 January 1936 the Wehrmacht published a military science periodical, *Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau*; its purpose was to promote 'the Wehrmacht officers' further education in military science and deepen the understanding of the tasks of the Wehrmacht among all persons connected with it'.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Draft of address by Ic, 10 Feb. 1938, BA-MA RH 53-9/18.

<sup>50</sup> Decree of 1 Apr. 1935, BA-MA RH 39/160.

<sup>51</sup> Sachße, *Roter Mohn*, 145ff. (16 July 1938).

<sup>52</sup> Ordinance of 21 Apr. 1934, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 164. These objectives of the internal 'propaganda campaign' had been set out by Foertsch to the Ic on 17 Apr. 1934, BA-MA RW 6/v. 56. See Schwengler, 'Marine und Öffentlichkeit', 44ff.; Meier-Welcker, 'Briefwechsel', 95ff., and generally Ehrke-Rotermund, 'Die Wehrmacht als Gegenstand der Literatur'.

<sup>53</sup> Thus the ordinance of Lt.-Gen. Beck of 1 Apr. 1935, BA-MA RM 8/57.

From the wealth of propaganda literature only a handful of significant examples will be listed here. In 1935 Hermann Foertsch's book *Die Wehrmacht im Nationalsozialistischen Staat* appeared;<sup>54</sup> it was categorized by the Reichswehr ministry as 'fundamental for all political instruction in the Wehrmacht'.<sup>55</sup> The education and training of a 'true-to-life tough fighter' and 'resolute warrior for Germany' was to Foertsch the resuscitation of an ancient Germanic virtue: 'Live loyally—fight death-defyingly—die laughing.' Education in the National Socialist spirit had as its objective a soldierly attitude and training in military skills. The two were to complement each other. Walter Jost, Foertsch's former fellow-protagonist in the Wehrmacht office and now a lieutenant-colonel and battalion commander, wrote in the periodical *Die Wehrmacht*: 'Like everything in human life, morale is a matter of race, education, and training.' As early as 1938 Maj. Cohr's *Soldat im Dritten Reich* had appeared in the NSDAP Central Publishing House as a paperback.<sup>56</sup> Intended for the navy was Siegfried Sorge's book *Der Marineoffizier als Führer und Erzieher*, first printed in 1937 with later editions adapted to the development of the Wehrmacht.<sup>57</sup>

Whereas the chapter on the Wehrmacht in Kurt Hesse's *Kleine Heeresgeschichte* in 1934 had still been entitled 'The army of the future', in 1938 it was called 'The National Socialist people's army'.<sup>58</sup> Historiography, too, was anxious to discover trails of tradition for the 'political soldiery of the present' and to sharpen the 'view for the connection between army and state system, war and ideology'.<sup>59</sup> There had always been two basic forms of soldiery in German history – the people's army based on universal conscription and the professional soldiery rooted in vassalage.<sup>60</sup>

Wulf Bley's book *Wehrpflicht des Geistes: Gestalt und Berufung des Soldaten* was published in Munich in 1935. In unambiguously racist confrontation against 'Jewish Marxism' it inter alia interpreted the First World War as the 'attempt by the subhumans to prevent the emergence of the German master human by a campaign of annihilation' (p. 58). Albrecht Blau of the Reich

<sup>54</sup> This brochure had a 4th ed. in 1940. See Foertsch, 'Preußentum und Soldatentum', 50–9. Also published in 1940 was Foertsch's booklet *Der Offizier der deutschen Wehrmacht: Eine Pflicht-enlehre* in its 4th edn.

<sup>55</sup> Guidelines for instruction on political issues of the day [*Richtlinien für den Unterricht über politische Tagesfragen*], 3 (1935), BA-MA RWD 12/30.

<sup>56</sup> Cohr was a member of the Luftwaffe and of the *Inland* department of the OKW. In February 1939 his booklet was, on Himmler's instructions, sent to all SS leaders 'for thorough study'.

<sup>57</sup> The 2nd edn. appeared in 1940. In its preface Sorge spoke of the 'unprecedented rejuvenation through National Socialism of the vigour' of the German soldier, the 'fundamentally National Socialist leader virtues' of the German officer, and of the 'renewal of the German people in National Socialism.' In the 4th edn. it was stated that the aim of the officers' instruction was 'education towards patriotic, National-Socialist and soldierly thinking'. On Sorge's activities after 1945 see Sorge, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, 26 ff., 115 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Both editions carried a foreword by Blomberg which regarded character and personality as the decisive element behind events. See Rosen, 'Kurt Hesse'; Uziel, 'Blick zurück'.

<sup>59</sup> Ganser, *Söldnerheer*; Höhn, *Revolution*; Schmitthenner, 'Der Weltkrieg'. On the relationship between historiography and National Socialism see Volkman, 'Johannes Haller', as well as the collection *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, and Messerschmidt on 'Karl Dietrich Erdmann' in his *Militarismus, Vernichtungspolitik, Geschichtspolitik*.

<sup>60</sup> Franz, *Volkskriegerertum*.

war ministry's psychological laboratory was rather more scholarly in his book *Geistige Kriegführung*: this saw the conflict of 'mind against mind' as equally justified and equally weighty as that of 'weapon against weapon' and 'economy against economy'.<sup>61</sup> A Catholic garrison priest and First World War soldier, he insisted in 1935 on theologically embellishing the introduction of universal conscription. In order that the young soldier pass through the 'ordeal by fire of one's innermost value' and perform for his nation his 'honourable service clad in field grey', discover 'the harmony of bodies in step, run and handling, feel the harmony of souls in comradeship, love of fatherland, and self-discipline', the author wished to show him 'the great source of strength' on which he might draw 'in young, manly manner – your sacred Catholic faith'.<sup>62</sup> The year 1938 also saw the publication of Erich Weniger's *Wehrmachtserziehung und Kriegserfahrung*, which opposed the belief that the great memories were worthless and that training of the young soldiers must start afresh.<sup>63</sup> What was called the enlightenment of the people and its 'immunization against the poison of enemy propaganda' was served by the *Bibliographie der geistigen Kriegführung* published in Berlin in the same year. Its editors, Felix Scherke and Ursula Gräfin Vitzthum, declared unambiguously that the struggle of ideological weapons knew no peace: 'It is war in peacetime.' Ideological warfare, from the psychological point of view, was defined as 'the art of collective guidance of souls' and in military terms a means of preparing for war.<sup>64</sup> Hans-Adolf Jacobsen described it as 'indirect leadership' which, together with the direct command mechanism of the Wehrmacht, formed an indissoluble entity.<sup>65</sup>

The main concern of this political pedagogy was the *Volkgemeinschaft's* ideological unity. The requirements of military training came, together with National Socialist ideology, under the umbrella of 'national political education', a draft for which Ernst Kriek had already put forward in 1932.<sup>66</sup> Maj. Hasso von Wedel, in a publication permeated with National Socialist ideas, postulated 'Education and Military Service in the Third Reich'.<sup>67</sup>

The SS similarly intensified the ideological schooling of its men. Its supreme guiding principle was 'fervent belief in our ideology and the Führer. Imbued with this faith "self" then becomes an invincible weapon.' Walther Darré was concerned not with the communication of knowledge, but with the 'education of the SS men in a solid ideological attitude, on a Nordic racial basis'. The SS was 'not to "know" about National Socialism, but "live" it'.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Blau, *Geistige Kriegführung*, 76.

<sup>62</sup> Werthmann, *Wir wollen dienen*. For this source I am obliged to my friend Klaus A. Maier.

<sup>63</sup> Further passages in Weniger's brochure of 1944, *Die Erziehung des deutschen Soldaten*. See Siemsen, *Der andere Weniger*, 151 ff.; Keim, *Erziehung*, ii. 130 ff.; Hartmann, 'Erich Weniger'.

<sup>64</sup> Gen. von Cochenhausen, chairman of the German Society for Military Politics and Sciences, welcomed the publication of this bibliography. Ideological warfare from the Marxist point of view is dealt with by Schreiner, *Vom totalen Krieg*, 93–109. <sup>65</sup> KTB OKW, i. 210 E.

<sup>66</sup> See Messerschmidt, 'Bildung und Erziehung', 192; Gamm, *Führung und Verführung*, 207 ff.

<sup>67</sup> Wedel, *Wehrerziehung*.

<sup>68</sup> Order of the chief of the race and settlement office of 16 Oct. 1934, BA NS 2/277. See Matthäus, Kwiet, and Förster, *Ausbildungsziel Judenmord?*

Hitler's demand that the Wehrmacht should be ready for action within four years, both materially and ideologically, did not therefore remain an empty phrase, since the military leadership had already taken account of it in its plans for rearmament.<sup>69</sup> It was, to be sure, Hitler who not only determined its long-term goal,<sup>70</sup> but increasingly also accelerated the tempo of providing the means. In order to get closer to his politico-military goal of creating a 'truly German people's army' as the 'most socialist institution' of the state, he had given orders on 13 May 1936 that the leaders of the Wehrmacht and the officers under them were to be 'selected according to the most stringent racial points of view, resulting in a selection of best German ethnic quality as educators in the soldierly school of the nation'.<sup>71</sup> Even before Hitler's directive the Military Law had been amended at the request of the Reich war ministry and 'Jewish half-breeds', at that time still tolerated in the Wehrmacht, stripped of their officer eligibility.<sup>72</sup>

Hitler's racially defined merit principle was taken over by the Wehrmacht as its 'line of policy and aim' for its future personnel policy. Blomberg expected that this would lead also to a strengthening of the moral cohesion of the army.<sup>73</sup> In the autumn of 1938, however, Gen. Walther von Brauchitsch, the army's new commander-in-chief, had to admit that the ideal German officer—racially beyond criticism, highly educated, and ideologically assured—was not available in the short run. In spite of strict selection, the twenty-first officer replenishment year (autumn 1936 to autumn 1938) did not meet the stringent requirements. Although almost every fifth officer applicant was not taken on, the commander-in-chief of the army did not find the necessary 'inner dynamism' in those judged suitable. Many had made a 'restrained impression'; there had been only 'very few striking personalities'. In order to have access to the desired type of future officer—leader, educator, teacher, and example—more quickly, Brauchitsch ordered that even greater importance be attached to 'racial selection' and 'educational level'.<sup>74</sup>

Needless to say, the educators in this 'soldierly school of the nation' had first to be schooled themselves for the communication of National Socialist ideas

<sup>69</sup> See Deist in *Germany and the Second World War*, i.

<sup>70</sup> See Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, 23 Feb. 1937: 'Führer says his great work was: "I have taught the world to distinguish the means from the end! The end is the nation's life. Everything else is but the means." He expects a major world conflict in five to six years. In 15 years he will have liquidated the Peace of Westphalia [1648]'. <sup>71</sup> Müller, *Das Heer und Hüter*, doc. 23.

<sup>72</sup> See Blomberg's proposal of 5 Mar. 1936, BA R 43 II/1275, and the relevant amendment of the Military Law of 26 June 1936, repr. in Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 456–7.

<sup>73</sup> Blomberg's address to NSDAP *Kreisleiter* on 27 Apr. 1937, repr. in *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 104; see Förster, *Vom Führerheer der Republik*, 314.

<sup>74</sup> Guidelines for the training of cadets in the forces of 20 Oct. 1938, BA-MA RH 37/2378. See Chapter III of this section (13 Oct. 1939). The result of officer replenishment was even worse in the area of II Army Corps (Stettin). In 1936/7 only just under 50 per cent of applicants were considered suitable. The commanding officers nevertheless accepted half of those unsuitable; 96 per cent of these proved to be failures (commanding officers' conference of 15 Nov. 1937, former MA DDR (Potsdam, now BA-MA), R 14.02.01/134, fo. 34. On the poor 'educational standard' of the 1915 class see the report by the Reich Labour Leader of 18 Jan. 1936, repr. in Jonas, *Verherrlichung*, 261 ff.

demanded from them. This was accomplished in a major 'national politics course' for teachers in the instructional establishments of the Wehrmacht and for the officials concerned in command HQs and units. This was run in the Reich war ministry in Berlin from 15 to 23 January 1937.<sup>75</sup> Prominent Party figures such as Rudolf Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Frank, and Walter Buch spoke on the NSDAP and its history, ideological foundations, and jurisdiction; ministers such as Frick and Goebbels spoke about the structure of the Third Reich and the essence of National Socialist propaganda. Hans Günther, Arthur Gütt, Falk Ruttke, and Reinhard Höhn lectured on race, health, population policy, selection, and law; educationalists like Helmut Stellrecht and Ernst Kriek spoke on the military training of young people and national political education. At the end a syllabus was drawn up as a practical example of National Socialist instruction at military colleges. The main themes were the National Socialist movement, protection of the race, the rebuilding of the Reich, and safeguarding of the economy.<sup>76</sup>

Alongside the lectures just listed there is another that was to acquire significance because of the later single-minded translation of its contents into reality—that by Heinrich Himmler on the nature and tasks of the SS and the police. The Reich leader SS, from 17 June 1936 also chief of the German police, spoke not only about its structure and about the system of concentration camps, but openly declared that in a future war there would also be a 'theatre of war inside Germany'. Here one would have to deal with an ideological opponent, Bolshevism, as the 'organization of subhumanity, the absolute underpinning of Jewish rule'. At stake in this domestic theatre of war would be the German nation's 'to-be-or-not-to-be', for the next war would be not 'just some conflict to do with foreign policy' but a 'war of annihilation by this subhuman opponent' against Germany. For that the whole nation must have its ideological armoury as well.<sup>77</sup> Himmler's maxim was complemented by Reichsleiter Buch, a retired major and supreme Party judge, when he impressed on the officers of the Reich war ministry that a 'leadership stratum made up solely of soldiers' was not sufficient for the German nation's claim to existence.<sup>78</sup> Following Blomberg's replacement the troops were able to learn from the *Völkischer Beobachter* that 'the Party would now feel even more responsible for the work and morale of the German Wehrmacht'.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Published as a Wehrmacht service manual and distributed down to company level. See the syllabus, BA-MA RM 8/59; Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 69–70.

<sup>76</sup> For the presentation of these themes prior to 1939 see the syllabus plan of the Wehrmacht's educational institutions, repr. in Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 64–5, as well as the instruction of VII Army Corps of 30 June 1937, sgd. v. Reichenau, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 1204, fo. 201.

<sup>77</sup> Service publication of the OKW, 156–7. Himmler's speech is also repr. in IMT, xxix. 206 ff.

<sup>78</sup> Lecture to officers of the Reich war ministry on 14 Oct. 1937, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Repr. in Meier-Welcker, 'Briefwechsel', 99 (6 Feb. 1938).



At the beginning of 1938 the third course on national politics was held. This time the participants were commanding officers, course leaders, and directors of the war and weapons schools.<sup>80</sup> On this occasion the chief of the Wehrmacht supreme command (the OKW), Col. Hermann Reinecke, went a step further than Blomberg, defining the 'political soldier' as the educational objective.<sup>81</sup> As early as 1929 Gottfried Feder had characterized National Socialism as 'political front-line soldierdom'. On 24 April 1936 Hitler himself spoke publicly of the 'political soldier', meaning, however, the future political leaders of the National Socialist Reich that was to last for millennia.<sup>82</sup> Reinecke now transferred this concept to the Wehrmacht.

In a democratic pluralist social system like the Weimar republic this model would 'indeed have been a revolutionary experiment by the military'.<sup>83</sup> In National Socialist Germany it was merely a synthesis of soldierdom and ideology, as well as 'unswerving loyalty to the Führer's will'. Reinecke believed that the officer should no longer be just a tactical leader of his men, but also their political leader. His educational task was producing the 'trained fighter' and the 'responsible citizen of the nation and bearer of the faith'. To match up to it he must be imbued with the National Socialist idea and be its 'bearer and proclaimer'. Yet this demand did not in any way mean that the German officer was to become the Party's 'political commissar'. Hitler had, ultimately, made the education of the troops the sole responsibility of the Wehrmacht; the officer was the sole leader and educator of his men. With this statement Reinecke was merely restating the guiding principle of the officer replenishment regulations of 26 April 1937 (D 8/3).<sup>84</sup>

In concluding his lecture Reinecke once more stressed that the demand for the Wehrmacht to be firmly rooted in National Socialism was meant seriously. With the express approval of the commanders-in-chief of the army, navy, and

<sup>80</sup> XII Army Corps, for instance, entered its divisional commanders as participants in the course, BA-MA RH 53-12/67.

<sup>81</sup> Draft of his lecture on 2 Dec. 1938 and undated, slightly edited duplicated version, *Offizier und Politik* (key phrases), BA-MA RW 6/v. 156. The second national politics course was held in Berlin from 17 to 21 Jan. 1938. At its conclusion Hitler spoke; one of the participants was Col. Kurt Student, BA-MA Pers. 6/58; see also IMT, xxviii. 356. See Jodl, *Tagebuch*, 21 Jan. 1938, repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 247.

<sup>82</sup> Hitler's speech at the inauguration of the 'Order Castles' (*Ordensburgen*) at Crössinsee, Sonthofen, and Vogelsang, on creating the new political leaders' corps for the German nation's struggle for its life, BA NS 19/4017. See Gamm, *Führung und Verführung*, 418 ff. This is also how Roland Freisler's avowal as 'Adolf Hitler's political soldier' (27 Mar. 1933) should be understood. He repeated it in October 1942 as the newly appointed president of the people's court; three years previously Freisler had described the special courts as the 'panzer troops of the administration of justice'. For the OKW, Hitler was the first political soldier. See 'Guidelines for instruction on political issues of the day' of 31 Dec. 1938, 5, BA-MA RWD 12/30.

<sup>83</sup> Messerschmidt, 'Bildung und Erziehung', 203.

<sup>84</sup> This point of view was also put forward by the chief of the OKW, Gen. Wilhelm Keitel, on 7 May 1938 against the claims of the Party. Instructing the troops on National Socialist thought was the most noble task of the regimental officer, especially the company commander. See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 218.



Luftwaffe he publicly announced personnel policy consequences: 'Whoever believes in his conscience that he cannot or does not wish to implement unconditionally and unreservedly the requirements that have been set out has no right to belong to the officer corps of the National Socialist Wehrmacht.'<sup>85</sup> The same conclusion had been stated by Col. Foertsch in a periodical for the troops: 'Whoever might think that Wehrmacht and soldierdom carry within themselves a layer insulating them from politics has failed to understand what is needed for the life and passing away of nations. He is not suitable to be an officer . . . The Wehrmacht is an instrument of politics . . . The officer of the Third Reich is a National Socialist, or he is no officer of the new Germany.'<sup>86</sup>

This view was also unreservedly held by Rear-Adm. Wilhelm Canaris. Addressing Ic officers of the Wehrmacht, he described himself, on 3 March 1938, as a 'front-line' soldier of the National Socialist state, and demanded of them that they should 'without reservation stand on the soil of the National Socialist state and act in that spirit'.<sup>87</sup> The chief of the *Inland* (home affairs) department, Capt. Gustav Kieseritzky, added that national politics lectures on the position of the Wehrmacht in the state, on Party and Wehrmacht, and on Wehrmacht and ideology should be held within the framework of staff officer courses as well. In May 1938 the chief of the general staff, Lt.-Gen. Beck, gave orders that instruction on 'the National Socialist ideology as the main pillar of the German state and its Wehrmacht' be intensified at the war academy.<sup>88</sup>

The November pogrom against the Jews in Germany provided the topical background for the article 'Der Weltkampf des Juden' that appeared in No. 24 of *Richtlinien für den Unterricht über politische Tagesfragen* [Guidelines for Instruction on Political Issues of the Day] on 1 December 1938. No mention was made in it of the excesses, torchings, or murders, but all the more about 'Jewry's century-old intention to annihilate' Germany. Its 'last attack'—meaning no doubt the attempt on the life of Ernst von Rath in Paris on 7 November 1938—had been answered by the German government with further legislative measures and the demand for a financial 'atonement' of one billion Reichsmarks. Even Gen. von Fritsch, who had become the victim of an intrigue by

<sup>85</sup> Col. Rommel, commanding the war college at Wiener Neustadt and a participant on the course, noted: 'Today's soldier must be political . . . The Wehrmacht is the sword of the new German ideology.' Quoted from Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 46. Irving, certainly mistakenly, believes that Hitler gave a secret lecture in the Reich war ministry in December 1938.

<sup>86</sup> Foertsch, 'Wer soll Offizier werden?', 4. See Sodenstern, 'Vom Wesen des Soldatentums'; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 177 ff. Reserve officers, too, had under the regulations of 12 May 1938 to be 'firmly rooted' in the National Socialist state; this is demonstrated, inter alia, by the measures taken against Lt.-Gen. Groppe in 1940 and 1942, BA-MA N 739.

<sup>87</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 56. Repr. with old file number in Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 641–5. In a summary distributed in military district VII Canaris was quoted: 'An officer must be unreservedly a National Socialist, just as once he had to be a monarchist', BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 8. See Mueller, *Canaris*.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted from Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 296. On the implementation of this order see the programme of the national politics course 1938/9, BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 8, and Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, doc. 38, 648 ff.

the National Socialist regime, used these unhappy events as an opportunity to declare his anti-Semitism: before Germany could become powerful again the battle 'against the Jews' must first be won. This struggle, he said, was the hardest and it was not decided yet.<sup>89</sup> The 'Jewish question' had been 'officially' posed a year previously, when the 'Directive' No. 18 of 14 September 1937 defined the struggle for the enlightenment of the German people on this point as a 'very important part of what National Socialism sought to do in the field of racial policy insights', calling on every individual to behave in the way 'the Führer has to expect from us for our and our nation's benefit'.<sup>90</sup>

On 18 December 1938 the new army commander-in-chief, Walter Brauchitsch, for the first time publicly expressed his views on the education of the officer corps. Prior to his appointment on 4 February 1938 he had promised Keitel 'to bring the army closer to the state and its thinking';<sup>91</sup> now he complained that, despite the orders of the past few years and major efforts along their lines, the value of educating the officers towards a unified spirit and a unified conception of their profession was still not being fully realized. Brauchitsch was certainly not doing this in contrast to his predecessor, since Fritsch, even after his disgraceful dismissal, still declared: 'I believed that I was, and still am, a good National Socialist.'<sup>92</sup>

Traditional soldierly values and ideological content converged in the army commander-in-chief's views on education. The life's task of the officer as the educator and trainer of his men found its culmination not in peacetime but in war. The Wehrmacht was the ultimate sanction in the hands of the Supreme Commander and 'inspired Führer' of the new Greater German Reich. It was more important than ever before to raise 'officers strong in will and faith, personalities of firm character'. Because Wehrmacht and National Socialism sprang from the same root, the officer corps could allow none to surpass it 'in the purity and fastness of National Socialist ideology'. It was 'the flag bearer that remains unshakeable even if everything else were to fail'.<sup>93</sup> Brauchitsch gave orders that regimental commanders responsible for the education and leadership of their officer corps should once a month instruct their officers on the whole area of education and questions of honour. Naturally this could not be done without the allocation of additional travel expenses for the regiments, whose officers as a rule were scattered over several garrisons.<sup>94</sup>

This was also the line of Germany's political and military leader who, in 1939, waged a real ideological campaign to win over the German officer corps.

<sup>89</sup> Reynolds, 'Der Fritsch-Brief', 370.

<sup>90</sup> BA-MA RWD 12/30.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted from Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 290 n. 159.

<sup>92</sup> Mühleisen, 'Fritsch-Krise'; see BA-MA RH 2/v. 134.

<sup>93</sup> *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 107. The education of officers and officer cadets was also the subject of Brauchitsch's discussions with the commanding generals and Gen. Fromm's talks with the departmental heads of the AHA and the chiefs of staff of the reserve army, IWM, M.I. 14/981 [2], 31 Jan. 1939. See Kroener, 'Fromm'.

<sup>94</sup> See request by Col. Hubert Lanz, commanding Mountain Rifle Regt. 100, dated 11 Jan. 1939, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 709.

Whereas Brauchitsch on 18 December 1938 had turned to the commanding officers, Hitler spoke, in turn, to the youngest officers (18 Jan. 1939), to senior commanders of the Wehrmacht services (25 Jan. 1939), to the commanding officers in the army (10 Feb. 1939), and to the graduates of the war academies (11 Mar. 1939). He wanted not only the top figures in the Wehrmacht to be familiar with 'basic National Socialist ideas', but also spoke to the junior officer corps about the unique racial core of the German people and its decisive mission.

In his—still rarely quoted—address to the army generals on 10 February 1939 Hitler demanded that they saw in him not only the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, but also the supreme ideological leader.<sup>95</sup> As officers they were likewise bound to him for good or ill. Like Brauchitsch, Hitler demanded 'that even if in my struggle for this ideology I were to be let down by the whole rest of the nation, then more than ever the whole soldier, the whole officer corps, man for man, shall stand before me and by my side'. Nor did Hitler leave the army generals in any doubt in February 1939 as to the character of the war he was aiming at, the war for *Lebensraum* for the German people. As growing racial awareness was driving men into battle, the next war would be 'a pure war of ideologies, that is to say consciously a war of peoples and races'.

This concept of the German officer corps as the 'very last guard' in the realization of ideological goals takes on its importance for the relationship between National Socialist and Wehrmacht from the fact that, a mere fortnight earlier, Hitler had publicly proclaimed: 'If international financial Jewry inside and outside Europe were to succeed in once more hurling the nations into a world war, then the result will be not the Bolshevization of the world and hence the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'<sup>96</sup> Even earlier, speaking to German press representatives on 10 November 1938, to the Wehrmacht youngest officer intake on 18 January 1939, and to their senior commanders a week later, Hitler had made it clear that what mattered now was to educate the German people into 'fanatical faith in final victory'.<sup>97</sup> The officers of the Wehrmacht, the military guarantors of the Third Reich, should sweep their men forward with weapons and ideology, and be 'unshakeable in the hour of misfortune'. Hitler wished nothing else of the officers of his Wehrmacht than to know they were around him, 'before me, left and right, and behind me, with drawn sword, proud and unshakeable, defying any fate that might befall us'.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Speech to the commanding officers of the army on 10 Feb. 1939, BA NS 11/28; repr. in Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 365 ff.; see *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 35.

<sup>96</sup> Reichstag speech on 30 Jan. 1939, Domarus, *Speeches and Proclamations*, ii, 1449; repr. in Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945*, iii, 1049.

<sup>97</sup> Speech of 10 Nov. 1938, BA NS 11/28; see Thies, *Architekt*, 119–20.

<sup>98</sup> Speech of 18 Jan. 1939, BA NS 11/28. On 25 Jan. 1939 Hitler was concerned more with the new leader elite, a racially pure master class. See also Hitler's order of 19 Oct. 1938, when he had demanded the Wehrmacht's faithful obedience to its leaders. From this alone could spring that enthusiasm, readiness for sacrifice, and keenness for action that were the more necessary the harder the task placed before it, Müller, *Armee und Drittes Reich*, 179–80.

The campaign for the ideological strengthening of the Wehrmacht was continued at the lower level. Although the 'increased importance' of 'instruction on National Socialist ideology and national political objectives' demanded by the commanders-in-chief of army, navy, and Luftwaffe from 1939 onward could be explained as part of the Wehrmacht's general preparation for war, the goal of the 'most uniform possible direction' of education and schooling of the troops had already been formulated by Blomberg three years previously.

From February 1939 so-called schooling brochures were published by the OKW at irregular intervals; these were to serve the company commander, the officer in charge of recruits, and platoon leaders as guidelines for their instruction on 'National Socialist ideology and national political objectives'.<sup>99</sup> The first issue contained an article setting out the programme for the political soldier of the Wehrmacht and the political educational task of the officer in instilling National Socialism. Only the combination of weapon with ideology would make the Wehrmacht invincible. The third issue carried the text of Brauchitsch's fairly general lecture on 'The army in the Third Reich', given to Party functionaries at the Sonthofen 'Order Castle' (one of four *Ordensburgen*, academies for training the Nazi elite) on 26 March 1939. Future issues began to deal with building up the right mood for the coming war, and dealt with 'The struggle for *Lebensraum*', 'Hands off Danzig!', 'The severed territories', and 'Poland – a multinational state'. The political adversary already being aimed at was not specifically named as such in the schooling brochures – but 'world Jewry' was in an article 'The Jew in German history'. He had to be fought like 'a poisonous parasite'. Jewry was not only an 'enemy of our nation, but a plague of all nations'. The military instrument, the new 'people's Wehrmacht of Greater Germany' as Hasso von Wedel termed it, was presented to Party members in word and pictures in February 1939. In the monthly journal of the NSDAP and the German Labour Front, *Der Schulungsbrief*, just as in the schooling brochures, officers of the OKW, Party officials, and a reputable historian published articles on the general subject of 'Military will and military might'.<sup>100</sup>

A year after assuming his post, the commander-in-chief of the army no longer confined himself to bringing it closer to National Socialism. He also wished to exercise a greater 'military-ideological influence' on the German educational system. In this Brauchitsch was probably motivated by three developments. First, according to the experience of the war colleges, the officer candidates for the army were falling short of requirements in inner élan and professional enthusiasm.<sup>101</sup> Secondly, internal surveys by the Reich labour service revealed that the 'National Socialist educational work' had

<sup>99</sup> See Maj.-Gen. Reinecke's introduction in *Schulungshefte*, 1 (1939).

<sup>100</sup> This 'main monthly of the NSDAP and DAF', *Der Schulungsbrief*, in its sixth year already had a print run of more than 4.2 million.

<sup>101</sup> ObdH/In I II No. 790 of 20 Oct. 1938, on *Richtlinien für die Ausbildung der Fahnenjunker in der Truppe*, BA-MA RH 37/2378.

considerable gaps.<sup>102</sup> Finally the army was preparing for the war with Poland. That was why Brauchitsch wanted to see in his soldiers, from the very start of their military training and ideological education, not just a 'securely founded National Socialist attitude' but military virtues as well.

As for the concrete 'military-ideological influence' on the entire German school system, he left that to the inspector of war colleges, Maj.-Gen. Fritz Brand. Simultaneously, a specially suited 'officer for school questions' was to be appointed in every military district.<sup>103</sup> During the same month the commander-in-chief agreed close collaboration with the National Socialist Teachers' Alliance for the education of youth to fighting fitness.<sup>104</sup>

Having an effect on young people was one side of the task, the 'military-ideological education' of the teaching staff was the other. Both tasks were further pursued during the war by the inspectors of the education and training system.<sup>105</sup> In the autumn of 1939 Brauchitsch scored a further success when the relevant minister in Baden issued *Richtlinien über die wehrgeistige Erziehungsaufgabe der Volksschule* [Guidelines for the military education work of the elementary school]. No boy or girl was now to leave elementary school without knowing 'that the defence of the nation's honour, liberty, and right to life' was 'the supreme task and the most sacred duty of every German'.<sup>106</sup> The Anglo-French declaration of war *after* the attack on Poland was skilfully used to redefine the German war aim as that of acquiring more *Lebensraum*.

Wehrmacht propaganda had already worked on similar lines in preparing the troops for the war against Poland. A good opportunity was provided by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, on 2 August 1939. 'Key phrases' were issued by the military leadership for the commander-in-chief and commanding officers of the three Wehrmacht services to use, to ensure that their addresses were 'uniformly worded'.<sup>107</sup> There was also reference to issue 6 of the *Schulungshefte für den Unterricht über nationalsozialistische*

<sup>102</sup> One in four RAD men had been unable to answer questions on fundamental facts about the Reich and its military history, see Jonas, *Verherrlichung*, 261–2.

<sup>103</sup> ObdH/In 1 IV, No. 1686 of 24 May 1939, on *Wehrgeistige Einflußnahme auf das Schulwesen*, BA-MA RH 12–1/v. 67. On the implementation of this order in military districts IX (Kassel) and VI (Münster) in June 1939, *ibid.* and BA-MA RH 15/20; see Kersting, *Militär und Jugend*, 188–9, 241–2, esp. 251 ff.; Gamm, *Führung und Verführung*, 238 ff. In the Rhine province 14 national politics courses were held for senior pupils; 28,051 pupils and 2,239 teachers took part in them. The objective was 'education in a National Socialist basic attitude, not to be shaken by anything', see Szliska, *Erziehung zum Wehrwillen*.

<sup>104</sup> Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv. 387.

<sup>105</sup> See activity report for 15 May 1941 and the lectures of the officers for schooling matters in military district XII (Wiesbaden) in early 1942, BA-MA RH 53–21/21 and RH 53–12/69, and of military district XIII (Nuremberg) 1940, BA-MA MSg 2/1448 and 1449.

<sup>106</sup> The minister for culture and education, Dr Wacker, 6 Nov. 1939, BA R 43 II/945 b. As the Reich chancellery noted, the Baden guidelines were known to the Reich ministry of education, and in part already applied in the whole of Germany.

<sup>107</sup> Order of OKH/AHA/H (V), No. 1153/39, 24 July 1939, BA-MA RH 39/222, and Kopp, 'Wehrmacht feiert'. On the psychology for influencing public attitudes see *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 118 ff.

*Weltanschauung und nationalpolitische Zielsetzung*,’ which contained a lengthy article on the First World War by Professor Paul Schmitthenner, a retired major and rector of Heidelberg University.

These official cue phrases made the point that ‘encirclement powers’ were once more at work against Germany, but this time they were ‘nervous, unsure, internally weak, and at odds with each other’. As politics and the military in the Third Reich were born of a common ideology, Germany’s position was the exact opposite – ‘calm, strong, self-assured, secure, and unbending’. Although the German people wanted peace, it was not afraid of struggle. This form of words had been, as it were, pre-empted by the commander of the 16th Infantry Division in his address on Hitler’s 50th birthday on 20 April 1939. Lt.-Gen. Heinrici, who had personally heard Hitler’s speech on 25 January 1939, spoke to his staff of the Führer’s ‘infinite love for the German people, whose *Lebensraum* and chance for life had to be won by struggle’.<sup>108</sup>

General preparations for the ‘ideological education and spiritual care’ (*wehrgeistige Betreuung*) of the forces in the coming war had begun in the summer of 1938, as they had also in the area of military criminal law. The memorandum sheet on this, prepared by the OKW, was integrated in the service manual for the forces and general staff officers, and distributed towards the end of September 1938.<sup>109</sup> According to this, the ‘spiritual care’ of the troops was solely a means for ‘combating discontent and enemy propaganda activity’. More important forms of influence on the troops were discipline, military successes, the superior officer’s example, and his care for those under him. Admittedly, the importance of ‘spiritual care’ increased the longer the war lasted, as experience of the First World War had ‘unambiguously shown’. In those conditions the troops’ need for distraction, entertainment, and cheering up would increase. For the moment, however, the task was to strengthen the forces in their will for victory. Ideological care was not a matter of judgement, but a duty on the superior officer. ‘Empathy with what the troops were hungering for’ was recommended to them and to their back-up officers (the Ic). Ideological care by so-called ‘education’ officers, like those in the final phase of the First World War, ‘which must ultimately lead to a kind of political commissar’, was not intended.<sup>110</sup>

The structure of the high commands was similarly adapted to the impending war in the spring of 1939, when special sections for ideological warfare were created. The Wehrmacht *alone* was responsible for the maintenance of morale, of the psychological readiness for battle, and of the will to victory – not the Reich propaganda ministry.<sup>111</sup> In the operations staff of the OKW a Wehrmacht

<sup>108</sup> Quoted from Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 26.

<sup>109</sup> OKW/I (Pr) No. 2250, 29 Sept. 1938, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 188; OKH/GenStdH/11. Dept. IIe, 21 Mar. 1939, BA-MA RH 54/v. 144; 27. Inf.Div., Ia, 26 Aug. 1939, BA-MA RH 37/1883; see H.Dv. 2g, 29 June 1939, 82ff., or H.Dv. 82g, 1 Aug. 1939, 91 ff.

<sup>110</sup> See Förster, ‘Weltanschauung als Waffe’.

<sup>111</sup> OKW/I (Pr), 28 Sept. 1938, BA-MA RM 7/1103; see Moll, ‘Die Abteilung Wehrmachtpropaganda’, 115 ff.



propaganda department was set up under a general staff lieutenant-colonel, Hasso von Wedel. Its task was the 'Direction of ideological welfare'. 'Schooling of the Wehrmacht in National Socialist ideology and national political objectives', like 'Leisure planning as a means of ideological influence', were the responsibility of the OKW's home affairs (*Inland*) department. The high commands of the army, navy, and Luftwaffe each had their own departments.<sup>112</sup> Cooperation between Wehrmacht and the Goebbels ministry 'in matters of war propaganda' was institutionalized in July 1938 by appropriate directives and the provision of a liaison officer or 'Reich Defence Official'.<sup>113</sup>

The course of the war in Europe, triggered by Hitler with the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939, was to show to what extent the wish of the Wehrmacht leadership for ideological unity and the superior officers' example of 'German character and German essence' matched the reality of war in different theatres and in the occupied territories. The war's own dynamics, especially the reaction of the adversaries aimed at, would change the German preparations that have been described above, and set new yardsticks.

<sup>112</sup> OKW/WZ (IV), No. 732, 25 Mar. 1939, ref. *Organisationsänderung und Dienstanweisungen*, as well as OKW/WFA/WPr IIc, 13 July 1939, BA-MA RW 4/v. 143 (emphasis added), and BA-MA RH 19 III/343a; see Schwengler, 'Marine und Öffentlichkeit', 45–6.

<sup>113</sup> See *Kriegspropaganda*, 103–4; Moll, 'Die Abteilung Wehrmachtpropaganda', 114 ff. and Wentscher's activity report of 30 Jan. 1940, BA-MA RW 4/v. 243.



### III. Ideological Warfare in the Early, Victorious Phase

ON 1 September 1939 the Wehrmacht attacked Poland. Two days later the British and French declaration of war made it clear that with Operation WEIß, as it was called, Hitler had triggered a European conflict. This pulled the rug from under the OKW's directives to its propaganda companies that in their operational reports they should speak only of fighting, and not of war.<sup>1</sup> Poland was accused of responsibility for the war 'forced upon Germany', a war that Lt.-Gen. Heinrici was not the only one to see as a 'preventive war'. Addressing the Reichstag, Hitler publicly justified his decision by claiming that Warsaw had rejected a peaceful revision of the 'Versailles diktat'. For his home and foreign audience the 'Führer of the German nation' acted as though he were concerned only with its honour and with the liberation of Danzig.

From the orders of the day of their supreme commander and their immediate commanders-in-chief the troops, at any rate, were able to gather that against Poland they were waging a just struggle for the 'enduring safeguarding of German ethnicity and German *Lebensraum*'.<sup>2</sup> What was really at stake after 1 September 1939 was at that time known, or surmised, by only a few. Gen. von Brauchitsch, in his order of the day, also pointed out that the 'young National Socialist army [would] justify the confidence placed in it'. The army would fight and be victorious in the knowledge of 'the power and strength of German military readiness'. On how it proved itself in war—as the commander-in-chief made clear within army circles—its position and influence in peacetime would depend.

Had Germany's ideological mobilization for the war succeeded? How National Socialist had the Wehrmacht become in the meantime? Those in charge were all well aware of the difference between August 1914 and September 1939. There was no enthusiasm for war. The propaganda minister was certainly overrating his undeniable abilities when he told the commanders of the army propaganda companies deployed in the Polish campaign that he could produce the enthusiasm of 1914 in three days. But he did not wish to do so: 'The present mood is more solid, better for the further war than that of 25 years ago.'<sup>3</sup> The line put forward by Goebbels was wholeheartedly followed by Max Simoneit, the leading army psychologist.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Addendum of WPr dept. to Goebbels's directive of 2 Sept. 1939, BA-MA RW 4/v. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, iii. 175 off.; also order of the day of army commander-in-chief, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 1069 (emphasis added). See Förster, 'From Blitzkrieg to Total War'.

<sup>3</sup> File note by Gruppenleiter Heer, OKW/WPr on the lecture of 9 Jan. 1940 in Berlin, BA-MA RH 1/v. 58; see also Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, vii, 10 Jan. 1940, when he recorded his sharp criticism of the work of the propaganda companies. On the difference between attitude and mood see Metzsch, *Clausewitz-Katechismus*, 31.

<sup>4</sup> Simoneit, *Deutsches Soldatentum*.

By the end of the war Hitler himself assessed the state of morale in 1939 much more pessimistically. The war, he believed, had come twenty years too soon. 'The result has been obvious. Thanks to this discrepancy between abstract conception and practical realization, the war policy of a revolutionary state like the Third Reich has of necessity been the policy of petty bourgeois reactionaries.'<sup>5</sup> More positive than Hitler's judgement in the face of total defeat were those made during the war by his official propagandists and the chief of the operations department of the naval war staff as to morale in the Wehrmacht and public in September 1939. While the Reich press chief and his staff at the Führer's headquarters had emphasized the strong will for victory and the doctrine of annihilation during the operations against Poland, Adm. Kurt Fricke, looking back to August 1939, said in 1942: 'In consequence, the German people entered its new struggle for freedom with nerves already tensed after difficult times, with teeth clenched, but in its spirit greatly strengthened, in trust and confidence in its strong, firm leadership, hard and resolute.'<sup>6</sup>

After a few days of fighting in the east the OKW enquired of the commands whether their troops were in need of 'stronger ideological and spiritual support'.<sup>7</sup> These concerns were dispelled by the rapid victory over Poland. The absence of any painful reaction from the western powers markedly improved the mood in Germany, and led to a desire for peace becoming evident.<sup>8</sup> On the day of Hitler's 'peace offer' to the western powers the commander-in-chief of the replacement army however warned against excessive optimism about the prospects for peace. Gen. Friedrich Fromm, addressing the deputy corps commanders, declared that the soldier was the 'upholder of the will to fight and of tough resistance, and must prepare for the most unfavourable circumstances. Any wishful thinking would weaken his will to resist.'<sup>9</sup> Two months later the OKW similarly sought to avoid anything 'that might give rise to a soft, sentimental mood or to a longing for peace in any of the soldiers or their dependants'. As the German nation was observing a *war* Christmas, this was not a festival of peace 'but a festival serving the stiffening of the will to resist, and the awareness of our own strength'. The army propaganda companies' contributions to the new year should, indeed, result 'in assured confidence in final victory, not in peace'. That would come as a natural consequence of victory.<sup>10</sup>

After the conclusion of the operations against Poland the Wehrmacht was faced with two main tasks. *Strategically*, Hitler had decided, it was to deal the 'big blow' in the west, 'as powerfully and as soon as possible', i.e. to smash France and bring Britain to its knees.<sup>11</sup> He was staking everything on the war

<sup>5</sup> Hitler, *Political Testament*, 14 Feb. 1945.

<sup>6</sup> See Dietrich, *Auf den Straßen des Sieges*, and Fricke's letter to the Japanese Vice-Adm. Naokuni Nomura, 9 June 1942, BA-MA RM 7/95.

<sup>7</sup> Telex of 6 Sept. 1939, BA-MA R 19 III/377.

<sup>8</sup> See Kershaw, 'Der Überfall auf Polen', and Fricke's letter to the Japanese Vice-Adm. Naokuni Nomura, 9 June 1942, BA-MA RM 7/95.

<sup>9</sup> Conference on 6 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 230.

<sup>10</sup> WPr Ib of 8 Dec 1939, directive to propaganda company, BA-MA RH 19 III/377.

<sup>11</sup> For the first plans for a German landing in England see 'Studie Northwest' of 13 Dec 1939, BA-MA RM 7/894.

card; peace he spoke of only for propaganda purposes. *Structurally*, the strengthening of the 'will to attack' and the 'inner consolidation of the forces' were the main concerns. The shortcomings in discipline and self-control revealed in Poland during and after the operations were to be eliminated, so that the combat value of the troops, 'the foundation of victory', was maintained.<sup>12</sup>

What lay behind the use by the officers in the field and the officials in the high commands of terms such as 'indiscipline, excesses, and arbitrary actions' against the Polish civilian population? There had been looting, swindling, arbitrary shootings, and maltreatment of helpless persons, unauthorized participation in SS executions, rape, and burning of synagogues.<sup>13</sup> Lt.-Col. Helmuth Groscurth, Ic (intelligence officer) to the army commander-in-chief, blamed these on 'years of [ideological] education'.<sup>14</sup> Commanding officers acted against these 'very serious phenomena among the troops' with disciplinary and court-martial proceedings. Their verdicts were counteracted by Hitler's amnesty order of 4 October 1939 in all cases where the offender had acted 'from bitterness over atrocities committed by Poles'. Crimes or offences committed for personal gain (e.g. looting) and from personal motives (e.g. rape) were not, in Brauchitsch's view, to be amnestied.<sup>15</sup>

Along with the restoration of discipline and order in the field army, the occupation army, and the replacement army—with the 'idea of education' being decisive, rather than that of 'punishment'<sup>16</sup> — the military leadership was of course mainly concerned with the attitude of the officers, on whom they believed all performance and value of the forces depended. It was fully realized that the officer corps was heterogeneous, showing a high percentage of reserve officers. For that reason education towards uniform officer-like thinking and action (the 'leader point of view') was to be paramount, the slogan being 'The war needs "real men" as leaders.' They should intervene wherever necessary, 'regardless of whether this concerned their own or another unit'.<sup>17</sup>

From October 1939 both the army officer candidate and company commander courses in the army were based on the principle of 'A little theory, a lot of practice, and a lot of educational input.' In the latter courses the age

<sup>12</sup> See the numerous orders of the army commander-in-chief in the autumn of 1939, repr. in *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*.

<sup>13</sup> See orders of C-in-C Fourteenth Army, Gen. Wilhelm List, to his commanders, 18 Sept. 1939, and of ObdH, No. 362/39, 24 Sept. 1939, BA-MA RH 24-8/98, as well as the report of the consultant psychiatrist with the army health inspector, 28 Nov. 1939. *Die seelische Lage im Bereich der 1. Armee*, BA-MA H 20/483 b; Umbreit in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I; Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*.

<sup>14</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 216 n. 546 (10 Oct. 1939).

<sup>15</sup> ObdH/GenStdH/GenQu (III), Az. 467, No. 1826/39 of 7 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 14/32.

<sup>16</sup> Official conference of GenQu with the *Oberstkriegsgerichtsräten* of the western front, 4 Nov. 1939, BA-ZNS, WR. See Messerschmidt, *Wehrmachtsjustiz*.

<sup>17</sup> ObdH/GenStdH/Ausb.Abt Ia No. 400/39 of 13 Oct. 1939, sgd. Brauchitsch, BA-MA RH 19 I/27; see also the order of the officer commanding XV Army Corps of 5 Oct. 1939, sgd. Hoth, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 4. The war colleges received new educational directives, BA-MA RHD 23/29. On the make-up of rear-area services from men with no or only brief training and under sometimes not fully competent leaders see H.Gr. Süd, Ia of 1 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 24-10/256; Kroener in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I.

and training differences in the officer corps became glaringly obvious; many showed little interest in their tasks as educators and trainers—they wanted to lead their companies only tactically.<sup>18</sup>

Education was handled in a similar way at the Mürwik naval college. Its new commander Rear-Adm. Walter Lohmann, at a party with the teaching staff in October 1939, declared that the goal of education was defined by the 'granite principles of the professional duties of the German serviceman' (Lohmann was referring to duties allocated on 25 May 1934) and by the idea of German soldierdom that 'pervades us all'. 'This soldierdom is united with love of the sea and of seafaring, as well as our conviction of the importance and significance of seafaring for our nation, indissolubly linked with National Socialism and its Führer, who is leading our nation and Reich to new freedom and greatness, and who is our supreme commander.'<sup>19</sup> Educating naval officer candidates into representatives of a fatherland 'with worldwide tasks in the future' was, at the Mürwik naval college, in the hands of the company commander acting as 'cadet father'. 'In his personalized instruction he speaks about ideological issues, about national political matters, and many of them, perhaps, also about delicate areas.' Just like the army, the navy too was interested in seeing the young cadets also 'becoming "real men"' during their first six-month war service afloat.<sup>20</sup> The training of Luftwaffe servicemen, from February 1940 onward, proceeded under the slogan of 'sweeping them along into a peak effort of their spiritual, intellectual, and physical strength, and strengthening in them discipline, obedience, comradeship, and readiness for sacrifice'.<sup>21</sup>

During the 'phoney war' of 1939/40 the Wehrmacht made a variety of organizational efforts in the area of ideological education and spiritual care. The high commands of the Wehrmacht services set up appropriate departments. The Reich ministry for public enlightenment and propaganda similarly established a 'department for troops' welfare' that cooperated with the relevant authorities in the OKW, *Inland*, and Wehrmacht propaganda offices.<sup>22</sup> The Wehrmacht, needless to say, was anxious 'vigorously to present soldierly ideals and achievements to the public, and thereby to strengthen the nation's military will'.<sup>23</sup> Internally the army, navy, and Luftwaffe were able to follow their own paths, since central directives for the ideological education and care of the troops were still lacking and the commentaries supplied by the OKW scarcely differed from comment in the daily press.

<sup>18</sup> Occurrence report from Army Group A of April 1940, BA-MA RH 24-8/18 a; see XV Army Corps Ia of 4 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Lohmann's speech on 25 Oct. 1939, repr. in Lohmann, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Marine-Ausbildung*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 28, 39. On the instruction of the troops on topical military and political issues see the material published for the purpose by the Baltic Naval Base (1939 to 1941).

<sup>21</sup> RLM and ObdL, Chef AW/Ausb.Abt. (V) of 21 Feb. 1940, BA-MA RL 7/699.

<sup>22</sup> OKW/WFA/WPr IIb 6 of 6 Nov. 1939, BA-MA RW 4/v. 144; *Kriegspropaganda*, 103ff. From 1 Feb. 1940 Hans Martin was the OKW liaison officer with the Reich ministry of public enlightenment and propaganda at the same time as being *Gruppenleiter* in WPr.

<sup>23</sup> These were the tasks of *Gruppe V (Heer)* in the OKW's WPr department. See Uziel, 'Army, War, Society and Propaganda'.

The OKW had indeed issued 'suggestions' on how ideological guidance could work through a meaningful shaping of the troops' leisure time.<sup>24</sup> Responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the troops, including lectures on ideology and leisure time activities, lay needless to say with the unit commander concerned, as 'the sole spiritual and military leader of the unit'. In the area of ideological education and spiritual care he made use of his third general staff officer, the Ic. As, however, even group or departmental heads still lacked experience with providing such welfare in wartime, it could happen—as it actually did in the case of the Luftwaffe—that they sought the advice of academics for the practical shaping of their work.

The Ic officers were also responsible for supplying the troops with newspapers, illustrated journals, radio sets, and films, distribution of which had been stepped up by the high commands. Hand in hand with spiritual welfare of the troops went social welfare for them, such as the establishment of servicemen's clubs, canteens, etc.<sup>25</sup> Official reports on the measures taken and their success ranged from 'generally satisfactory' to 'pleasing'.<sup>26</sup> In November 1939 the commander-in-chief East, Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz, had the impression that ideological education and spiritual welfare for the troops—men with an average age of 35 to 40—was only just beginning. Postal and newspaper deliveries needed to be greatly improved, press and radio should mention the army in the east, too, and at home measures should be taken against 'harassment by the authorities' of servicemen's wives. In spite of such aggravations and their monotonous guard duty the men made a 'willing, keen impression'.<sup>27</sup>

To the military commander of the Posen (Poznań) area, Gen. of artillery Alfred von Vollard-Bockelberg, ideological education and spiritual care of the troops meant that all officers must 'inconspicuously and continually' see to it 'that, regardless of the duration, course, and increasing hardships and privations of the war, no attitude can ever gain hold like that in November 1918'. That was why the concept of ideological welfare must on no account decline into an empty slogan or assume the character of the 'so-called "patriotic instruction" of 1918'.<sup>28</sup> Gen. Hermann Hoth, commanding XV Army Corps, believed

<sup>24</sup> Luftwaffe routine orders, pt. C, 72 (13 Oct. 1939); see the detailed implementing rules in the replacement army of 19 and 23 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 19 III/488. Lt.-Col. Groscurth, Ic of the army commander-in-chief, did not think there was any need to pass on the suggestions of the *Inland* department to the troops; he informed the command authorities of the army in the field accordingly on 2 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 19 I/96.

<sup>25</sup> On the establishment of servicemen's clubs in occupied France see the order of the chief of the military administration of 29 Sept. 1940, BA-MA RL 7/283, and the illustrated booklet on the weekend recreational facilities of the Paris armament inspectorate at Château Villelourrette south of Paris from the end of May 1941, BA-MA MSg 2/3475.

<sup>26</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 318 (4 Jan. 1940); official report of the OKW liaison officer with Goebbels, Maj. Wentscher, on a tour in the west, November 1939, BA-MA RW 4/v. 185.

<sup>27</sup> OB Ost, *Lage im besetzten Gebiet*, 27 Nov. 1939, BA-MA RH 1/v. 58.

<sup>28</sup> 17 Oct. 1939, quoted from Berghahn, 'NSDAP', 27–8. See Förster, 'Ludendorff and Hitler'.

it was 'high time to imbue our men with a *burning hatred of England*'. That was the enemy that had to be struck down 'before Germany could rest in peace'.<sup>29</sup>

Like Blaskowitz, Col. (GS) Otto Hoffmann von Waldau, heading the operations department in the Luftwaffe operations staff, believed that the 'spirit and attitude of the troops [in the west] had remained good', even though the frequent postponements of the date of attack—combined with a continuous demand for combat readiness—had got on their nerves. The troops' marked self-confidence was based on their 'confidence in the superiority of their equipment and of their own skills'.<sup>30</sup>

A month after Hitler had ruled that '50 per cent part-Jews ("first-degree Mischlinge") or men married to 50 per cent part-Jews or to full Jewesses'<sup>31</sup> were no longer to serve in the Wehrmacht, the army commander-in-chief commended 'the unification of the German people in National Socialism' and defined the officer as the 'authorized exponent of the idea of German unity in the army'. Because Germany was in a different condition from that in the First World War, it could successfully take on the 'decisive struggle' against France.<sup>32</sup> Even his rather critical Ic, Groscurth, was of the opinion that, by contrast with 1939, people and army were now as one.<sup>33</sup> His assessment was shared by the Party. When on 16 April 1940 Rosenberg explained the 'historic meaning of our struggle' to 'soldiers of the western front', he firmly believed that nation and Wehrmacht were militarily and politically united; and were so in the knowledge that Germany must fulfil its mission of emerging so strong from the war, as the Greater German Reich and the power centre of Europe, that no coalition of any kind could ever shake it'.<sup>34</sup>

It was indeed the surprisingly swift victory over France, the bogeyman adversary, that created an unprecedented harmony between regime, public, and Wehrmacht. Hitler was floating on a wave of national euphoria. 'True German soldierdom achieved its supreme crown and permanently wiped out the disgrace of Versailles.' Nothing seemed impossible to the German soldier. Emotionally overcome, the commanders-in-chief of the Wehrmacht services hailed the 'Führer' as 'the first soldier of the Reich', who would secure Germany's future for all time.<sup>35</sup> For the OKW the German successes were

<sup>29</sup> Order to the commanders, 5 Oct. 1939, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 4. Vice-Adm. (ret.) Adolf von Trotha even saw at work in England a 'satanic brutality against anything that is German in the world', as he wrote to ObdM on 16 Oct. 1939, BA-MA N 158/18.

<sup>30</sup> Personal diary, entry for 18 Apr. 1940, BA-MA RL 200/17.

<sup>31</sup> OKW/J Ic of 8 Apr. 1940, sgd. Keitel, BA-MA RH 22/271; Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*, 116ff.

<sup>32</sup> Order of ObdH, PA, and HWesAbt of 8 May 1940, BA-MA RH 19 I/50; *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten*, doc. 110. In April 1940 there also appeared the first *Mitteilungen für die Truppe*, issued by OKW/WPr. Simultaneously Hitler had given orders for the troops to be made aware, by talks from their officer, of the 'inhuman atrocities committed against ethnic Germans by the Poles—including the Polish army' (secret supplement No. 8 to OKM routine orders (5 Apr. 1940), BA-MA RM 8/68).

<sup>33</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 275.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenberg, 'Der geschichtliche Sinn unseres Kampfes', 19–20, repr. as an OKW pocket-book for the troops.

<sup>35</sup> Order of the day, 25 June 1940, BA-MA RH 19 I/50; KTB SKL, pt. A, ii. 259 (25 June 1940).



founded in the 'revolutionary dynamism of the Third Reich and its National Socialist leadership'.<sup>36</sup>

It was not only Hitler who ascribed this triumph to *his* conduct of the war, and to the élan of the National Socialist 'revolutionary army' (no doubt an exaggeration, though an understandable one after the objections of the generals to his decision of October 1939).<sup>37</sup> London, too, thought it had detected a revolutionary spirit in Germany resulting from the 'incredible conception of a movement . . . young, virile, dynamic, and violent, which is advancing irresistibly to overthrow a decaying old world, [one] that we must continue to bear in mind; for it is the main source of the Nazi strength and power'.<sup>38</sup>

On 14 August 1940 Hitler used the presentation of marshal's batons to deserving commanders-in-chief as an opportunity to reiterate 'how indispensable it is for the Wehrmacht, too, to avow National Socialist thought'.<sup>39</sup> The heavy burden of being a paladin of the Third Reich was besides lightened by a secret, tax-free, additional 'expense allowance' of 4,000 Reichsmarks a month.<sup>40</sup> The life philosophy of National Socialism with its ideal of the people's community was undoubtedly an important factor in psychologically binding many servicemen to the regime. In terms of history there was another factor—the Wehrmacht's triumph in the west. This had convincingly confirmed it as the arms bearer of the nation. Yet another factor was the skilful marketing of the achievements of the German soldier under their 'Führer and supreme commander' in all civilian and military media of the Third Reich. The Party receded into the background behind Adolf Hitler and his Wehrmacht.<sup>41</sup> The fascination of victory seized the soldiers more deeply and strengthened their 'mental resistance' and 'ideological readiness for war' more than all the books, directives, discussion evenings, or lectures by the 'German Society for Military Policy and Military Sciences'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Announcement of 2 July 1940, BA-MA RW 4/v. 37.

<sup>37</sup> See Vietinghoff diary, entry for 22 May 1940, BA-MA N 574/2.

<sup>38</sup> Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 166–7 (19 June 1940).

<sup>39</sup> Bock's diary, entry for 14 Aug. 1940, BA-MA N 22/5a. On promotions, see Förster, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*. Bock's statement was relativized by that of another contemporary, who believed that the generals need not be National Socialists. However, the blind obedience demanded of them vis-à-vis the political leadership would be 'easier' for the colonels-general and field marshals, 'even against their inner conviction, if they had received appropriate honours from the leader of the state and in consequence had to feel obliged to him and hence also to the state'. See Engel, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler*, 86 (22 June 1940).

<sup>40</sup> On the expense allowance and grants see Goda, 'Black Marks', 413–45; Ueberschär and Vogel, *Dienen und Verdienen*.

<sup>41</sup> See Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 27 (24 June 1940); Förster, 'Ich bin der erste Soldat'.

<sup>42</sup> See its official list of speakers in September 1939, which includes prominent names, BA NL 15/433. In its series *Deutsche Wehrkraft* the NSDAP in 1940 published Karlheinz Rüdiger's essay on 'Mental readiness for war', as well as the lecture by Gen. Dr.h.c. Friedrich von Rabenau on 'Ideological and mental problems in this war', see Plessen, *Friedrich von Rabenau*. Kurt Eggers wrote 'On the freedom of war'. Written by active officers of the OKW, there appeared in the same year a 'List of duties' for the officer of the German Wehrmacht (Hermann Foertsch), as well as an essay 'The Company Commander' (Hans Ellenbeck).



However, the army leadership was not content with what had been achieved, as the 'education and attitude' of the troops in the occupied territories 'did not yet, despite the directives issued, everywhere come up to what was demanded of them'. The shortcomings criticized by Brauchitsch towards the end of August 1940 mainly concerned the troops' dealings with the local civilian population—they continued to buy from Jewish shops—and offences against discipline and good order. The army commander-in-chief asked the commanding officers to continue ideological education and spiritual care along the lines set out in his orders of 18 December 1938, 18 December 1939, and 8 May 1940.<sup>43</sup> From the end of May 1940 the Wehrmacht could ask for 'political speakers from the NSDAP'.<sup>44</sup>

Provision of films for the troops had been in the hands of the Party, especially those of Goebbels and Robert Ley, only since September 1940.<sup>45</sup> Reports from the troops stated that films, theatrical, and musical events were very popular. The OKW had to put a damper on requests from the troops for more films in April 1941 on grounds of raw materials, fabrication, and costs. Thus practically no new apparatus was manufactured and the troops had to be satisfied with twenty-five copies of each new film, though major-release and top-rank films were supplied in forty copies. Wedel also reported that the Wehrmacht had to pay the film industry RM 1,500 for every copy.<sup>46</sup> Radio was seen as the best way of providing morale support.<sup>47</sup> One ranker, for instance, spoke of the radio as his 'best mate'; it had a calming effect and made a 'big difference in making us feel better'.<sup>48</sup>

At least for the army, by far the biggest of the Wehrmacht services, the 'Directives for Service with the Troops in the Winter of 1940/1' of 7 October 1940 marked a new phase in the history of morale support. In the run-up to the war with the Soviet Union ideological education was assigned a higher degree of priority. It was taken out of morale support, and put on an equal footing with it. Brauchitsch ordered that all superiors should devote 'special attention' to ideological education. What mattered was not the *number* of topics discussed, but that 'a *uniform* concept of the foundations of National Socialism should exist in the army and become the common property of all

<sup>43</sup> ObdH HWesAbt and PA (2) No. 179/40 of 31 Aug. 1940, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 218 b; ObdH/GenStdH/GZ No. 1620/40 of 5 July 1940, BA-MA RH 19 III/152; see also Hitler's order of 7 July 1940, which demanded of the Wehrmacht that it should also 'fulfil its task of an occupying power in the same irreproachable spirit' as it had conducted the campaign, BA-MA RM 8/62, fo. 83.

<sup>44</sup> See the order of RPL of 24 May 1940 and of the OKW of 21 Oct. 1940, BA-MA RM 45 IV/866.

<sup>45</sup> The relevant agreement with the OKW of 1 Sept. 1940 replaced that of 15/16 Sept. 1939, concluded by the OKW with the minister for science, education, and public education, BA-MA RM 45 IV/863.

<sup>46</sup> OKW/WPr of 8 Apr. 1941, BA-MA RH 19 III/488. In the autumn of 1941 thirty of the RPL's sound film projectors were withdrawn from occupied France and made available for the troops in the field in the east, BA-MA RM 45 IV/867, 23 Sept. 1941.

<sup>47</sup> Occurrence report of III AK, Ic, *re* morale support, 17 Sept. 1940, BA-MA RH 24-3/36.

<sup>48</sup> Arendt and Kretschmer, 'Der Überfall'.

soldiers'. Putting over the ideological message would be especially effective if done by the commanding officer who knows his men. The guidelines provided were meant to provide an aid to this ideological education. Along with lectures on the 'basic National Socialist concepts' (*Volk*, *Reich*, *Lebensraum*), reading matter, films, radio, and leisure activities, the 'word of an intellectually keen and lively officer, spoken personally to his men, was always the best means'.<sup>49</sup> However, the Soviet Union was not expressly named as a future adversary in the army commander-in-chief's directives of 7 October 1940.

Needless to say, not all officers devoted the same 'special attention' to the ideological education of their subordinates. Yet even those officers who still had reservations about Nazi policy supported a uniform alignment of the officer corps on certain basic political concepts. Thus Capt. (GS) Johann Adolf Graf Kielmansegg, the Ia officer of the 6th Panzer Division, pointed out that an officer should not lose himself in useless reflections 'about what we do not like or what really is not correct'.<sup>50</sup> It was pointless to resist the mighty stream of the National Socialist revolution, but there was 'sense in working on consolidating the river's new banks'. The mud and silt carried along with it would one day 'sink to the bottom, where it belongs'.<sup>51</sup> Kielmansegg reminded the adjutants of his division that the officers had to stand in 'the front line as *the* decisive educators of the nation' in the further development of the German revolution. 'Based on an old, proud, and sound tradition and preserving its values, we must while working for the future live, with fervent hearts, entirely in the present.'

As many officers had done before him, Kielmansegg interpreted the *Volks-gemeinschaft* as the core of National Socialism, and defined it as a sign of true soldierdom. That was why there must be 'no more loyal and selfless followers of the Führer than ourselves'. Officers, Kielmansegg continued, should not forget that in their hands were being placed the German young in the decisive years of their life. It was their important task to educate them for soldiering. 'It must never be a case of National Socialist or soldier, or of National Socialist

<sup>49</sup> Att. 1 to App. 4 of 7 Oct. 1940. See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 252–3, and the practical application of these directives in XXIV Army Corps and military district VII (Munich) of 20 Dec 1940, BA-MA N 254/36 and RH 54/102.

<sup>50</sup> Lecture at the adjutants' course of 6th Panzer Division at Deutsch-Eylau, n.d. [probably Oct./Nov. 1940], BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. Karl Feldmeyer and Georg Meyer, *Johann Graf Von Kielmansegg 1906–2006: Deutscher Patriot, Europäer, Atlantiker* (Hamburg etc., 2007), 91–100. Many of the demands addressed by Kielmansegg to the officer corps were identical with what his former divisional commander Weichs had been urging his officers to do in the spring of 1937, see Ch. II of this section. Graf Kielmansegg wrote to the author (letter dated 18 July 1998) that personally he had 'even then been on the path to resistance' and had 'written his political remarks in the "coded language" necessary at that time'. In the spring of 1960, when explaining the 'timeless values' of the officer class to officer candidates of the 5th Panzer Division, Kielmansegg harked back to that lecture, BA-MA BH 8-3/44. For the reference to this source I am obliged to my colleague Michael Poppe, Freiburg i.Br.

<sup>51</sup> This simile had been used earlier, in the summer of 1933, by Lt.-Gen. Adam, chief of the *Truppenamt*, see Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 45 n. 61.

and soldier, but solely of the National Socialist soldier.' Officers must not allow themselves to be outstripped by anyone in the political education of the soldiers, because it was they to whom Hitler had entrusted the task of educating the young men in the Wehrmacht, not only professionally into bearers of arms 'but into National Socialist soldiers as *the* type of the German of today'.

Kielmansegg concluded his lecture with the words: 'Anything we officers do, whether we fight, train, or educate, everything aims at one goal. That goal is Germany. Its leader is Adolf Hitler. He who is loyal to him, lives and dies for Germany.' Brauchitsch similarly had no doubt that the training of a soldier 'into a resolute and aggressive fighter cannot be separated from fervent National Socialist education'.<sup>52</sup> His training order of 21 February 1941 linked up directly with his directives of 7 October 1940. 'Special emphasis' was now to be put on 'educating leaders and men in a ruthless aggressive spirit, in boldness and resolute action, borne by confidence in the superiority of the German soldier over any opponent and by the inflexible belief in final victory'.<sup>53</sup> Theodor Eicke, commanding officer of the SS *Totenkopf* Division, likewise preached the 'whole man' approach. In his letter on teaching principles 'Sword and Plough' of 1 December 1940 he declared: 'To be an exponent of our ideology means achieving the whole—in body, soul, and intellect!'<sup>54</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Party did not think the Wehrmacht's 'ideological education work' went far enough, and wanted to extend its claim to leadership into this area. Reichsleiter Rosenberg, at any rate, had suggested to Hitler as early as autumn 1939 that he himself should also be entrusted with the 'spiritual strengthening' of the Wehrmacht and the 'consolidation of National Socialist ideology'.<sup>55</sup> Rosenberg's plans, however, met with resistance not only from other Reichsleiters—the Wehrmacht itself defended its leadership prerogatives, though it did negotiate with Rosenberg about some cooperation. After a conversation with Gen. Reinecke the Reichsleiter was looking forward to assuming control of all ideological schooling in the Wehrmacht, in order 'to make it into and preserve it as an eternally sharp sword of the National Socialist revolution'.<sup>56</sup>

Rosenberg's joy was premature. Although 'especially close collaboration' was agreed between his office and the Wehrmacht high command on 9 November 1940,<sup>57</sup> the Wehrmacht kept 'ideological education work' under its own control after Hess, too, had held Rosenberg back, reminding him that he had only a supervisory role. The Party was merely entitled to vet in advance

<sup>52</sup> ObdH/GenStdH/O Qu I, No. 500/40 of 7 Oct. 1940, Ann. 4, BA-MA RH 19 III/152.

<sup>53</sup> ObdH/GenStdH Ausb.Abt Ia, No. 555/41, BA-MA RH 22/101. On training in the replacement army see the order of 25 Oct. 1941, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 234b.

<sup>54</sup> VHA Prague, SS-T-Div, box 5, folder 26. See Förster, 'Weltanschauliche Erziehung', 96–7.

<sup>55</sup> See Berghahn, 'NSDAP', 20ff.

<sup>56</sup> Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch*, 147 (16 Sept. 1940).

<sup>57</sup> See the working agreement between Keitel and Alfred Rosenberg, since 1934 the 'Führer's commissioner' for this matter, dated 9 Nov. 1940, BA-MA RH 1/v. 81, and BA NS 8/184 (intra-Party correspondence). Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 246, considers it a 'significant success' for the Party.

whatever the Wehrmacht was going to issue in writing on the subject. It was further entitled to run training courses for those officers who were earmarked to be instructors within the Wehrmacht. The chief of the OKW explained this 'working agreement' to the three services by pointing out that it was Hitler's wish to integrate military schooling into the general ideological alignment of the nation, directed by the NSDAP. Even though ideological alignment in the entire Wehrmacht was being handled 'under its own responsibility', a 'uniform ideological attitude' throughout the nation was the common final goal.<sup>58</sup>

Nor is it true to say that the working agreement failed because of the opposition of the commanders-in-chief, or that the Wehrmacht high command arrogated to itself responsibilities within the army, navy, or Luftwaffe.<sup>59</sup> The recorded objection of the army commander-in-chief of 21 January 1941 was due solely to the fact that Brauchitsch regarded a posting of officers to the Party courses as inappropriate, given the already heavy workload on them during the preparations for the war against the Soviet Union. A few commanding officers handled the prescribed ideological education by inviting, whenever possible, speakers of the NSDAP (for the ranks) or Reich orators (a corps of elite speakers) for the officers. Thus, for example, the officers of the 3rd Panzer Division heard Professor Walter Gross speak about German racial and population policy during and after the war (29 January), SS-Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz about resettlement problems (30 January), and Gauleiter Alfred Frauenfeld about the importance of the Balkan states and Turkey in the struggle for the Mediterranean (25 February).<sup>60</sup>

There were also some Nazis who voiced their irritation at the way the *Volks-gemeinschaft* was being put into practice within the Wehrmacht. Heinrich Härtle, during the war in the west the *Sonderführer* of a propaganda company within the armoured group of Cavalry Gen. Ewald von Kleist and Panzer Gen. Heinz Guderian, returned to Berlin with mixed impressions of the inner structure of the army. In a report to Reichsleiter Rosenberg he believed that on the one hand the German soldier's faith in 'Führer and nation' was 'unshakeable', but that on the other the relationship between officer and rank-and-file soldier was not working at all.<sup>61</sup> There was 'no greater contrast between idea and reality than the National Socialist ideal of the *Volks-gemeinschaft* and the army's class system'. Only 'their National Socialist upbringing and their faith in the Führer' were preventing all the SA comrades and freedom fighters from

<sup>58</sup> OKW (I/Ia), No. 6790/40 of 23 Dec. 1940, BA-MA RH 1/v. 81, H.Dv. 22/I of 1 Apr. 1943, repr. in Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch*, 29 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Thus, wrongly, Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> BA-MA RH 27-3/165 and 167.

<sup>61</sup> Letter dated 24 Jan. 1941, BA NS 8/240. With this report Härtle infringed the army C-in-C's prohibition of 15 Jan. 1940 on approaching Party superiors on service matters instead of the military superiors, BA-MA N 739/folder 4. The agreement between Party and Wehrmacht of 17 Nov. 1939 was to have made it possible 'for officers and NCOs to be truly not only superiors, but leaders of the men entrusted to them'. Admittedly, this 'serving as comrades' had, as shown by the subsequent order of 30 Apr. 1940, to do with the superior officers' duty of care for their men rather than their command authority. See Rosenberg, *Das politische Tagebuch*, 12 ff.

becoming 'class struggle fighters' in the daily class struggle within the army. The officers' cult of 'keeping their distance' was giving rise to a 'pedagogy that did not respond to the soldiers' sense of honour or will to achieve', but built on their fear of their superiors and of punishment. Only in battle was 'the tone of comradeship suddenly found'. But men who were to die together should before then have been able to live together. The spirit of subservience was out of place in modern war. Moreover, because of its one-sidedness, the 'old Prussian authoritarian system' would represent a danger for the desired National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* if 'the military class education penetrated into the general life of the nation'. Unfortunately the dictum 'Human beings begin at lieutenant' still held sway. Disappointed, *Parteigenosse* Härtle observed that the 'inner penetration of the officer corps by men of the Party' had not been accomplished. 'The revolutionary army of the new Reich would in the long run be able to defend National Socialism on the battlefield only if it is itself profoundly pervaded by our ideology.' This process, however, would take generations to complete.

For this reason Härtle proposed a 'transitional solution' to the Party leaders: 'the Wehrmacht would develop its own political-ideology teaching system, but the Party would teach the teachers and produce the teaching material.' Such ideological schooling within the Wehrmacht could not however be carried out by a 'political commissar' as in the Red Army, nor by a person appointed by the Party, but only by a 'political officer'. The training of these officers, with a career path of their own, must of course be assumed by the Party. 'The most important educational aim' would be 'to convey to the young officer a genuine community experience that would take him out of the present rigid caste system and place him right in the heart of the life of the Party'.

The chief of the operations department in the Luftwaffe operations staff, Gen. Otto Hoffmann von Waldau, arrived at the opposite assessment of the spirit of the troops. As an end to the war was not at present in sight, everyone must 'become very tough'. This was a good thing for the people, to make sure arrogance disappeared and readiness for sacrifice and willingness to serve developed. 'At present these qualities are to be found solely among the troops. Inner social awareness—in military terms, comradeship—are not to be found anywhere [among the people]. It is a good thing that necessity will teach it to us.' However Waldau, promoted major-general on 19 July 1940, had 'no doubt' about final victory.<sup>62</sup> Even Härtle was far from criticizing only the army, but had included his Party as well. It had, he said, 'nowhere near succeeded in creating a leadership corps that could measure up to the officer corps in terms of inner consistency, style, bearing, or unity of type'. Härtle had not criticized the German people.

In his lengthy report to Rosenberg of January 1941 a role model again surfaced that was to occupy Wehrmacht and Party intensively in the further

<sup>62</sup> 16 Nov. 1940, BA-MA RL 200/17.

course of the war—the ‘political soldier’. The Wehrmacht high command continued to work on this model, first presented by Col. Reinecke in 1938/9. In April 1941 the Wehrmacht propaganda department in its *Information for the Troops* declared that the political soldier, strong in character and unperturbed by unsoldierly types such as ‘Cousin Cautious’ or ‘Uncle Weak-Kneed’, invariably had the ‘final German victory’ before his eyes. This, it was pointed out as early as August 1940, had to be won in a ‘total war’ against Britain’s ‘infernal will to annihilate us’.<sup>63</sup>

So far there was no official mention of the impending ‘ideological struggle’ against ‘Jewish Bolshevism’. While the Wehrmacht command staffs were preparing for this, the troops achieved another rapid success, this time in the Balkans. This strengthened their fascination with victory and their belief in their own invincibility. ‘Yes, it was wonderful . . . not once during all this fighting did I feel nervous as I did before Paris. If I saw the enemy, I would fire at them and always experienced a wild, genuine pleasure in fighting. –It was a joyous war . . . We are sun-tanned and certain of victory. It’s a wonderful thing to belong to such a division.’<sup>64</sup> This was written by a battery commander of the 11th Panzer Division to his wife. A tank driver, trained in the homeland, rejoiced from afar: ‘Splendid – indeed, splendid! That, my dear, is German military spirit.’<sup>65</sup> For Panzer Gen. Heinrich von Vietinghoff, commanding XXXXVI Army Corps, a dream had come true. ‘Our troops are simply unique.’<sup>66</sup>

Soon, however, it emerged that the ‘calm and security’ hoped for by the German leadership in the run-up to Operation BARBAROSSA had not been established in the Balkans. As resistance to the occupation began to take shape, the German command reacted with ‘ruthless measures’. In a logical application of the *Gerichtsbareitserlaß* (jurisdiction decree) the ‘most deterrent means’, that is to say execution by firing squad on mere suspicion, was seen as being the most effective. The justification for this was the ‘special conditions of the Balkans and the mentality of their population’.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Quoted from Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 324–5. Taken up again in July 1941 (No. 118).

<sup>65</sup> Richardson, *Sieg Heil*, entry for 25 May 1941.

<sup>64</sup> Sachße, *Roter Mohn*, 84 (22 Apr. 1941).

<sup>66</sup> Phrases from letters dated 18 Apr. 1941, BA-MA N 574/2.

<sup>67</sup> See the orders of AOK 2 of 28 Apr. and 30 May 1941, BA-MA RH 20-2/1087, 1088; Brown-ing, ‘Wehrmacht Reprisal Policy’, Manoschek, *Serbien*.



## IV. The War of Ideology and Annihilation in the East

WITH the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 the war took on a new dimension. In Hitler's eyes, the European conflict had ever since 1 September 1939 always been at base an ideological war, both outwardly and inwardly. Yet Operation BARBAROSSA was Hitler's real war, as emerged clearly from the interpretation he gave in March 1941. The Soviet adversary became the enemy *tout court*: the German defeat of 1918 was attributed to the undermining activity of 'Jewish Bolshevism'. Hence the war against the Soviet Union became even more necessary than that against the so-called arch-enemy France. Hitler's earlier, solely power-political justification for extending the war should not lead us to overlook the symbiosis of calculation *and* dogma, strategy *and* ideology, world *and* racial policy in Hitler's policy of war against the Soviet Union. His strategic interest in permanently securing German hegemony in Europe by smashing the Soviet Union was indissolubly linked with his *Lebensraum* programme, which also included the annihilation of 'Jewish Bolshevism' and the decimation of the Slav masses.<sup>1</sup> Nazi racial policy was significantly extended in 1941; the special conditions of the German-Soviet conflict were needed for ideological goals regarding Jews and Communists to become murderous reality.

Hitler's concept of annihilating his chimera of 'Jewish Bolshevism' became part of the conduct of the war and of the army's pacification policy, for its leaders had long been convinced that a deep gulf existed between the Bolshevik Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany, both racially and ideologically. As Hitler had been accepted by the army as also its ideological leader in 1941, his ideological directives could become, as Hans Buchheim put it, 'orders on service matters'. The relevant orders and directives of 13 March, 28 April, 13 and 19 May, and 6 June that year, together with their written and oral explanations before the outbreak of war, provided the basis for a special conduct of the war and pacification policy in the east. But Stalin's savage response to the attack in 1941, and the Wehrmacht's reaction to this, also helped lend the German-Soviet war a special quality.

On 30 March 1941 Hitler had announced the leitmotif of Operation BARBAROSSA to his senior army commanders assembled at the Reich chancellery: 'Clash of two ideologies. Bolshevism is synonymous with a social criminality . . . This is a war of extermination . . . Extermination of the Bolshevik commissars and the Communist intelligentsia . . . We must fight the poison of disintegration. This is no job for military courts. The individual troop commanders. . . must be leaders in this fight. Commissars and GPU men are

<sup>1</sup> See Förster in *Germany and the Second World War*, iv.



criminals, and must be dealt with as such . . . Commanders must give orders which express the common feeling of their men.' These were the notes in the diary of the chief of the army general staff. Three days earlier the army commander-in-chief had said to them in Zossen: 'The troops have to realize that this struggle is being waged by one race against another, and proceed with the necessary harshness.'<sup>2</sup> Gen. Wolfram von Richthofen, who had not attended the two conferences, considered the extension of the war towards the east necessary on strategic grounds, since 'the Russian was about to strike'. Richthofen, on the other hand, was not convinced by the ideological justifications, as not all Germans were fanatical believers in National Socialism.<sup>3</sup>

Several days before the attack, commanding officers already knew of the orders about 'special measures' against commissars and guerrillas; the troops, however, had still not been told. Even the June issue of *Mitteilungen für die Truppe* (No. 108) failed to answer the men's 'basic question of this war: where does it go from here?' The Wehrmacht propaganda department (IIe) stated only that they were all awaiting Hitler's command to 'fall in' The joy and euphoria at the military successes achieved and strong faith in the invincibility of the Wehrmacht had, it is true, been somewhat muted by Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland, by the experience of British tenacity, and by mistrust of the Soviet Union. 'Troops and population are readjusting . . . to the idea of a longer war; this is happening without enthusiastic activity, either with a patient sense of duty or with dull resignation.'<sup>4</sup>

In mid-February 1941 the Wehrmacht high command had launched a 'Disinformation for friend and foe' campaign: as a result, the 'craziest rumours' were circulating among the troops. Some considered the danger of war against the Soviet Union to be averted owing to Stalin's defensive attitude; others claimed that Germany had leased the Ukraine for ninety years and would shortly receive permission for transit by its troops in the direction of Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. While a tank captain raved about transport into the Caucasus as a 'fantastic undertaking', an infantry lieutenant, more soberly, observed: 'It'd be all right by me if it didn't come to war.'<sup>5</sup> A battery commander, on the other hand, told his men rather more factually that war with Russia was within the realms of possibility. The reason he gave, however, was biased: Germany could 'not put up with the perpetual threat. So: annihilation of Russia as a military power.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Both quotes *ibid.* 497, 485. On Hitler's speech on 30 Mar. 1941 see Förster and Mawdsley, *Hitler and Stalin*. On Hoth's notes see Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer*, 5–8.

<sup>3</sup> Richthofen's diary, entry for 2 Aug. 1941, BA-MA N 671/8.

<sup>4</sup> Army psychological report No. 11 of 7 June 1941, BA-MA RH 15/115.

<sup>5</sup> Sachße, *Roter Mohn*, 93 (11 June 1941); *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 67 (20 May 1941). See also the diaries of a motorcycle rider in Assault Gun Btn. 197 for 7 June 1941, in Arendt and Kretschmer, *Der Überfall*, 592; of a lance corporal in 258th Inf. Div. for 20 June 1941, in Pflanz, *Geschichte*, ii. 29; the morale assessment by a divisional chief of supply services, BA-MA RH 26–23/91; Kuby, *Mein Krieg*, 95 (4 June 1941); Fetscher, *Neugier und Furcht*, 70–1; see also Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, ix, 13 and 18 June 1941.

<sup>6</sup> Diary Capt. v. S.-H., entry for 24 May 1941 (privately owned).

The end of the almost two-year-long abstinence from ideological confrontation between Berlin and Moscow came on 22 June 1941. The German soldiers on the eastern front, more than 3 million of them, were suddenly swamped by official announcements of the meaning and purpose of the German attack. The earlier ideological preparation of the troops and those at home for the war against the Soviet Union, in itself wanted by the German leadership, had in the spring of 1941 played a lesser role than the strategic calculation of letting Britain continue to believe in a German invasion and being able to surprise the USSR. This was why official instruction of the troops was to start 'suddenly' only on the day of the attack.<sup>7</sup>

That was the job of the Wehrmacht propaganda department in the OKW under Col. von Wedel. It drafted not only Hitler's order of the day to the troops, but also special directives on how the troops should act towards Bolshevism. Both were communicated to the soldiers in their deployment positions shortly before the attack. Further propaganda salvos at the Wehrmacht and public were to follow—one, immediately after the attack, in the form of a radio address by Goebbels, articles in dailies and periodicals, as well as information sheets and *Information for the Troops*, and another, on 29 June 1941, in the form of twelve 'special announcements' over the radio.

In the order of the day to 'his' soldiers the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht justified the attack on his Soviet ally. Although Goebbels found this appeal 'magnificent', it was in fact a rather long-winded shifting of responsibility for the war on to Britain and the Soviet Union. The 'Jewish-Bolshevik power-holders', it claimed, had ever since 1917 been trying, from Moscow, 'to set Germany and Europe ablaze'. Britain had, in the summer of 1939, intended to destroy the 'new German people's state' with its 'comprehensive policy of encirclement'. Solely from a sense of responsibility for Germany he had then brought himself to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. A year later the 'massive deployment of Soviet divisions' had tied down such strong German forces at the eastern front that a conclusion of the war, 'especially in the air', against Britain became impossible. The 'final proof' of the well-known 'conspiracy of the Jewish Anglo-Saxon warmongers and the likewise Jewish men in power in the Moscow Bolshevik headquarters' had been the Belgrade coup on 27 March 1941. There, the German-Soviet friendship pact had been 'vilely betrayed'. Now, however, the hour had come for the Wehrmacht finally to blow apart the menacing coalition between 'Jews and democrats, Bolsheviks and reactionaries', and to end the 'great war as a whole' in victory. 'German soldiers! You are now entering on a hard struggle, heavy with responsibility. For the

<sup>7</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 513; Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 30; Knappe, *Soldat*, 201; Pz.Gr. 3, Ic, diary for 19 Aug 1941, 99, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 423.

fate of Europe, the future of the German Reich, the existence of our nation, are now in your hands alone.’<sup>8</sup>

By way of contrast, the ‘Directives for the behaviour of the troops in Russia’, drafted in agreement between the Wehrmacht propaganda department and the army high command, were concisely formulated. They were also intended to help secure the implementation of the *Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß*—the jurisdiction decree—and the commissar directives. Its key sentences ran:

I.

1. Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the National Socialist German people. Germany’s struggle is aimed at this disruptive ideology and its exponents.
2. That struggle demands ruthless and energetic action against *Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs, Jews*, and the complete liquidation of any active or passive resistance.

II.

3. Extreme reserve and the most alert vigilance are called for towards all members of the Red Army—even prisoners—as treacherous methods of fighting are to be expected. The *Asiatic soldiers* of the Red Army, in particular, are inscrutable, unpredictable, deceitful, and unfeeling.
4. After the capture of units the *leaders* are to be *instantly* separated from the other ranks.

III.

5. In the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) the German soldier is not facing a *uniform population*. The USSR is a structure of states uniting a *multiplicity of Slav, Caucasian, and Asiatic nationalities*, held together by the *violence of the Bolshevik men in power*. *Jewry* is strongly represented in the USSR.
6. A large part of the Russian population, especially the *rural population impoverished* by the Bolshevik system, holds in secret a critical attitude towards Bolshevism. In the non-Bolshevik Russian, *national consciousness* is associated with *deep religious sentiment*. Joy and gratitude at being liberated from Bolshevism will frequently find expression in ecclesiastical form. *Thanksgiving services and processions are not to be prevented or disturbed*.
7. The utmost caution is required in *conversations with the population* and in behaviour towards women. Many Russians *understand* German without themselves being able to speak it . . .

<sup>8</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1726ff. (not in English); Fetscher, *Neugier und Furcht*, 73–4; BA-MA RH 22/4. The Ic of Pz. Grp. 3 was not sure whether the order of the day had actually reached the companies by 2000h on 21 June 1941. The proclamation to the German people is, apart from interspersed allocutions, identical with the order of the day quoted. While the records speak of 58,000 copies, BA-MA RH 2/v. 1326, Goebbels believed that 80,000 had been printed, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, ix. 18 June 1941. The Soviet Union was told that the German nation was aware that it was not only going into battle to protect its homeland against the serious threat to its eastern frontier, ‘but that it is called upon to save the whole civilized world from the deadly dangers of Bolshevism and to clear the road towards true social progress in Europe’.

## IV.

8. . . . *Looting* will attract the most severe punishments in accordance with military criminal law.
9. . . . Any contact with the population involves danger to health. Protection of one's own health is a soldierly duty . . .<sup>9</sup>

Individual unit commanders likewise issued orders of the day which were made known to the troops. Their messages ranged from a terse 'Through and forwards!' (XXIV Panzer Corps), through 'The 1st Mountain Division is dragging the devil out from hell. The devil is standing before us. We shall annihilate him! Long live the *Edelweiß*! Heil to the Führer!', to 'Tomorrow we embark on the great struggle that we Teutons have to wage against Bolshevik slavery in order to preserve our German nation and our descendants. I have trust in our soldierly skills and your pluck. The Lord be with you!' (Panzer Group 4). The commanding officer of that Panzer Group 4, Gen. Erich Hoepner, had given instructions on these lines to his unit commanders as early as 2 May 1941: 'The old struggle against Slavdom, the defence of European civilization against Muscovite-Asiatic engulfment, the repulse of Jewish Bolshevism, is aimed at the shattering of Russia and must therefore be waged with unprecedented severity. Every combat action must be guided, in its planning and execution, by the iron will for the merciless, total annihilation of the enemy. In particular, the exponents of today's Russian Bolshevik system must not be spared.'<sup>10</sup> This was an independent application of Hitler's intentions of 30 March 1941.

At his personal request the armies, at short notice, also produced special information leaflets about the Red Army's 'underhand methods of warfare' and made them known to the troops before 22 June 1941. These were intended as a warning against the use of gas, poisoned wells, and food stores, against men merely pretending to be dead, Red Army men feigning surrender, against sadistic behaviour when taking prisoners, and perfidious attacks. Publication of such leaflets as 'Do you know the enemy?' (Ninth Army) or 'Watch out!' (Sixth Army) would, it was hoped, 'prevent the troops feeling scared or intimidated'.<sup>11</sup>

The information leaflets and directives achieved their purpose. Since morale was 'first-class', one of the addressees only noted soberly: 'As well, there is fear of a possible gas attack. Water must still be drunk only after being boiled.

<sup>9</sup> OKW/WFSt/AbtL, IV/Qu of 19 May 1941, special instruction No. 1 to Directive No. 21 (Case BARBAROSSA) Att. 3, BA-MA RW 4/v. 524. In the note from the German foreign office to the Soviet government of 22 June 1941 it was stated, on the contrary: 'Bolshevism is confronting National Socialism in mortal enmity.'

<sup>10</sup> Deployment and combat instruction for BARBAROSSA (study), Att. 2: *Kampfführung*, BA-MA RH 24-56/15. Similar notes were sounded by the commander-in-chief of the Eighteenth Army, Küchler, in addresses on 28 Apr. and 22 June 1941, as well as by the commander-in-chief of the Sixth Army, Reichenau, on 28 Apr. 1941, BA-MA RH 24-17/41. For the last source I am obliged to Felix Römer, Kiel. See Hürter, 'Die Wehrmacht vor Leningrad', 415-16.

<sup>11</sup> III. AK, Ic of 16 June 1941, BA-MA III AK, 16041/35; see *Germany and the Second World War* iv. 322-3, 515.

There is the fear that wells may have been poisoned by the Russians. It is also said that the Russian army, consisting as it does of various tribes, or indeed races, fights with treachery and cunning. In short, generally a very uncomfortable, no longer European but Asiatic adversary.'<sup>12</sup> Another recorded in his diary: 'In a barn we are taught about what fighting is like in Russia. We shall have to deal a lot with partisans. We shall have to expect poisoned food and wells, and a fanatical, inhuman way of fighting.'<sup>13</sup>

For the Wehrmacht propaganda department of the OKW the 'Jewish-Bolshevik Soviet government' and its representatives among the troops, the commissars, were *the* enemy above all others. Active propaganda directed at the Red Army is not the subject of this section, but hate propaganda intended for the Wehrmacht is; and vilification of the commissars had the 'significance of a propaganda dogma'.<sup>14</sup> It was designed to make sure the commissar directives were implemented. The phrasing used in the OKW's *Information for the Troops* No. 116 marks the ideological peak of German psychological warfare, even though the animal metaphor used was a stereotype when describing Bolsheviks. Under the heading 'Salvation from gravest danger' the July issue said:

Anyone who has ever cast a glance at the face of one of the Red Commissars knows what Bolsheviks are. There is no longer any need here for theoretical discussions. To call the features of one of these slave-drivers, a high percentage of whom are Jews, bestial would be an insult to animals. They are the personification of the infernal, the personification of an insane hatred of all noble human blood. In the shape of these commissars we experience the rebellion of subhumans against noble blood. The masses whom they are driving to their death, using every means of icy terror and insane incitement, would have brought an end to all sensible life had their invasion not at the last moment been frustrated.

Now, it went on, weapons would have the last word to say in this clash with Bolshevism.<sup>15</sup> The hate propaganda against the commissars in 1941 was able to build on the foundations laid by the Reich war ministry's 'Psychological Laboratory' in the autumn of 1935. Even then the 'gentlemen commissars and party functionaries' had been maligned as 'for the most part filthy Jews'.<sup>16</sup> The 3rd general staff officer of Armoured Group 3 at any rate assessed the enlightenment of the troops 'about the meaning and aim of the struggle, and about the duration of the war' by the *Information for the Troops* as 'excellent'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Arendt and Kretschmer, 'Der Überfall', entry for 21 June 1941; see Knappe, *Soldat*, 201–2.

<sup>13</sup> Pflanz, *Geschichte*, ii. 29 (20 June 1941).

<sup>14</sup> Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz*, 96; see *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 512–13, 515.

<sup>15</sup> BA-MA RW 4/v. 358. See the report of the Ic to commander of rear-area army zone South of 19 July 1941, who described the commissars 'as the ugly Asiatic face of the entire Red system', whose liquidation was a precondition for German victory, BA-MA RH 22/170.

<sup>16</sup> 'The ethnic composition of the USSR's population and possibilities for its use in propaganda' of 2 Nov. 1935, BA-MA RH 2/v. 981. The attached leaflets on the topic, mirrored in those of 1941, had been drafted by an 'All-Russian Fascist Party' in Kharbin. The 'Laboratory' was renamed in 1938 as the 'Wehrmacht central office for psychology and racial science'.

<sup>17</sup> Pz.Gr. 3, Ic, activity report of 19 Aug. 1941, BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 423.

The fact that the killing of captured commissars, illegal under international law, presented 'no problem' to the troops is not only attested by the numerous reports of executions,<sup>18</sup> but rank-and-file soldiers noted for themselves or told their relatives that 'commissars are always immediately shot'.<sup>19</sup> On the evening of the very first day of the attack an accounts and pay NCO in the 5th Infantry Division wrote:

The order is given for an hour's rest . . . Everybody is standing by a well, refreshing themselves. Suddenly a bang. Russians left behind are firing from a house some way back. Everybody snatches up his rifle and moves forward. Meanwhile a cannon is readied for firing. A direct hit on the house which bursts into flames. The nest of resistance is liquidated. Among the Russians there is also a commissar (political leader). By order of the Führer all commissars are to be shot. Rest is over, we move on. The commissar has to go with us. Towards evening he is shot in a field.<sup>20</sup>

Corporal H.K. of the 162nd Infantry Division, guarding a collection centre for captured materiel, recorded in his diary: 'On 17 July 1941 five political commissars, two of them Jews, who did their foul work in civvies behind our front, were summarily shot by us. They were betrayed to us by their own fellow-countrymen.' In October 1941 the chief of supply services of the 23rd Infantry Division recorded bluntly in his report: 'Commissars are the fanatical exponents of Bolshevism, they must therefore be shot for our own safety.'<sup>21</sup> Four weeks later Gen. Heinrici witnessed the execution of a commissar by field gendarmerie. 'Not pleasant for our people.'<sup>22</sup> When he was captured by a hate-filled French gendarme in the summer of 1944, a German soldier was reminded of BARBAROSSA. 'It is like that time in Russia, when we took the first political-commissars prisoner. No one held back the men who volunteered to give the shots in the neck. These were legitimate shots, at the Führer's command.'<sup>23</sup>

The rapid but massive instruction of the troops in the ideological struggle of annihilation against the Soviet Union could build on personal loyalties and long-standing images of the enemy. The threat to Germany from 'Bolshevism at home and abroad' (Werner von Fritsch, 1920) had been a taken-for-granted part of the military situation assessment by the Reichswehr. Goebbels in particular had time and again in the 1930s invoked the image of 'Jewish Bolshevism' as the foe.<sup>24</sup> Small wonder, therefore, that the propaganda minister on

<sup>18</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 1226ff.; Siebert, 'Die Durchführung des Kommissarbefehles' Unpubl. doc., MGFA. A comprehensive quantitative examination has been provided by Felix Römer, 'In besonderer Maßnahmen: Weitergabe, Ausführung und Akzeptanz des Kommissarbefehls im Ostheer', doctoral thesis, Kiel, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Diary of NCO G.S., entry for 6 July 1941.

<sup>20</sup> *Erlebnisberichte*, 12, 18. On 5 July 1941 the same soldier observes a POW camp near Lepel: 'The prisoners were sifted here. Commissars and those who did not fight honourably, that is to say snipers, were shot.'

<sup>21</sup> BA-MA RH 26-23/92, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 114 (21 Nov. 1941).

<sup>23</sup> Blickensdörfer, *Die Baskenmütze*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> See the articles in *Das Rußlandbild im Dritten Reich*, Förster, 'The German Military's Image of Russia', and id., 'Reichswehr und Antisemitismus'.



24 June 1941 spoke of quite simply playing the 'strongly anti-Bolshevik record' again for the population and Wehrmacht to hear.<sup>25</sup> This had been recorded by Goebbels in the spring of 1937, when he officially branded 'world Bolshevism', the mortal enemy of the German people, as a 'Jewish campaign' and 'organized crime'.<sup>26</sup> In July 1941 Fritz Sauckel, the Gauleiter of Thuringia, addressed the soldiers from his Gau. After making lengthy references to German history and heroizing Hitler, he considered it 'self-evident that we should deal with the mortal enemy of our nation, the Jew'; otherwise he would 'one day openly and brutally make his claim to world domination . . .'. The German people, its achievements, its Reich stood 'at the focal point of his hatred and his greed'.<sup>27</sup>

The war in the east was justified also theologically, as pastoral work in the field was regarded as an 'essential means' of promoting and maintaining the 'inner fighting strength' of the troops.<sup>28</sup> The Catholic head chaplain for the Wehrmacht, Franz Josef Karkowski, speaking on 29 July 1941, defined it as a European crusade for the annihilation of the 'Bolshevik Moloch'. In October 1941 the archbishop of Paderborn, Lorenz Jaeger, a highly decorated First World War officer, attempted to blend the soldiers' secondary virtues with the cardinal virtues of Catholic morality. Thus those in his archdiocese 'clad in field grey' became elevated into the ideal of the 'bonus miles Christi', the good soldiers of Christ, battling against anti-Christian Bolshevism.<sup>29</sup>

The ugly image of the foe painted by the Germans of 'Jewish Bolshevism' and its 'Asiatic' way of fighting took on even more garish colours as a result of the way in which the Soviet Union responded to the German attack. The worst excesses of Soviet special forces against German prisoners of war, and the mass execution of political prisoners that had now become public knowledge, were seen by both German commanding officers and their soldiers as the 'hideous truth' of what they had been told about.<sup>30</sup> In their orders, diary entries, and letters to their families earlier personal prejudices were able to mingle with recent impressions, just as military directions from above for a war of annihilation were easily combined with pragmatic considerations of military necessity. Gen. Georg Küchler had explained the murderous measures ordered by Hitler to his commanding officers as a kind of wedge being driven by the Wehrmacht between the decent Red Army men and their Bolshevik leaders, between the

<sup>25</sup> Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, pt. I, ix, 24 June 1941.

<sup>26</sup> Guidelines for anti-Bolshevik propaganda of 30 Mar. 1937, BA R 22/954. These had also laid down the Wehrmacht propaganda for the 1937 autumn manoeuvres.

<sup>27</sup> Attachment to the diary of Kdo St RFSS for 30 Sept. to 6 Oct. 1941, VHA Prague, box 5, folder 37.

<sup>28</sup> Order of OKW of 21 Aug. 1939. Quoted from ObHGr Süd of 1 July 1941, BA-MA RH 20-6/711.

<sup>29</sup> See Pape, 'Erzbischof Lorenz Jaeger von Paderborn', 150 ff.

<sup>30</sup> See the order of KG III. (mot.) AK of 3 July 1941, BA-MA RH 27-13/111; the report of the chief of supply services of 23rd Inf. Div., BA-MA RH 26-23/91; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 1195 ff. The Soviet side is treated, with bias, by Hoffmann, *Stalin's War of Extermination*.



obedient civilian population and fanatical partisans. It was a case of saving German blood and making headway faster.<sup>31</sup>

Many of the servicemen were aware of the radicalization of the war in the east. Thus Capt. Sachße noted as early as 29 June: 'It is a struggle of two ideologies. A struggle without mercy.'<sup>32</sup> Luftwaffe Gen. Richthofen recorded in his diary that German prisoners were 'very often done to death' and 'our men likewise [would] seldom take prisoners. The fighting is therefore very fierce and bloody' (28 June 1941). An anti-aircraft gunner observed: 'The Russian fights treacherously. Now I no longer know mercy' (2 July 1941). The commander of IX Army Corps, Hermann Geyer, acted against this attitude by reminding his men on 16 August 1941 not to repay like with like, 'but to work against the brutalization of the war . . . wherever possible'.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas, for instance, the Ia of the 295th Infantry Division tried 'in vain' to 'understand the meaning, purpose, and sacrifice of this campaign', and Richt-hofen was 'on the whole not at all keen' on this war,<sup>34</sup> others saw their ideological prejudices against Bolshevism confirmed. 'The German people has a massive obligation to our Führer, because if these beasts who are here our adversaries had come to Germany, there would have been murder done such as the world has not seen before . . . What we have seen cannot be described by any newspaper. And if one reads the *Stürmer* in Germany and sees those pictures, then this is only a very small indication of what we are seeing here and the crimes committed by the Jew here.'<sup>35</sup> A tank gunner of the 7th Panzer Division wrote to his father, a veteran of the First World War:

The pitiful hordes on the other side are nothing but felons who are driven by alcohol and the threat of pistols at their heads . . . They are nothing but a bunch of arseholes . . . Having encountered these Bolshevik hordes and having seen how they live has made a lasting impression on me. Everyone, even the last doubter, knows today that the battle against these subhumans, who've been whipped into frenzy by the Jews, was not only necessary but came in the nick of time. Our Führer has saved Europe from certain chaos.<sup>36</sup>

The accounts and pay NCO in the 5th Infantry Division quoted earlier felt sorry for every German soldier 'who falls victim here to this murderous gang. But God willing, it will be exterminated in this war, and Europe will be freed of the bloodlust of Bolshevism.'<sup>37</sup> However, the true face, the 'double face', of Operation BARBAROSSA does not emerge until the professional as well as the ideological aspect is taken into account. Surrounded by, in Günther Blumen-tritt's phrase, an 'aura of invincibility' the German soldiers were also quite

<sup>31</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 519–20.

<sup>32</sup> Sachße, *Roter Mohn*.

<sup>33</sup> Geyer, *Das IX. Armeekorps*, 117–18; see Knappe, *Soldat*, 220 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 522 (14 July 1941); Richthofen's diary, entry for 9 July 1941, BA-MA N 671/8. Nevertheless Richthofen considered the war on the eastern front 'exciting and more interesting than anything else'.

<sup>35</sup> *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 74 (10 July 1941).

<sup>36</sup> Richardson, *Sieg Heil*, 124 (4 Aug. 1941).

<sup>37</sup> *Erlebnisberichte*, 20 (22 July 1941).

simply proud of their military achievements to date and convinced of swift victory over the Red Army. 'Today was a day of pride for us all. War is not half as bad as it sounds' (25 June 1941); 'And so we move on to the final battle and victory' (4 August 1941). A month later, after the conquest of Reval (Tallinn), Karl Fuchs enthused: 'God, we are overjoyed! I guess the strength of the German soldier is unique and it seems that he is invincible . . . A country such as ours that has men like these must live forever' (3 September 1941).<sup>38</sup> By that time the battery commander in the 11th Panzer Division quoted earlier had already been killed in action at Berdichev; but he too had given free rein to his proud feelings about Germany and its Wehrmacht. 'We launch wonderful attacks [8 July 1941]. There's only one country one's got to love because it is so marvellously beautiful—Germany. What in the world could compare with it?' (10 July 1941).<sup>39</sup>

Soon, however, it turned out that the Soviet Union had been underrated militarily, organizationally, and politically. The 'Russian colossus' was evidently made of iron, not of clay. The Soviet system had not collapsed under the blows of the Wehrmacht. The Red Army was fighting more tenaciously, and tactically more skilfully, than had been expected, 'the individual fighter was fiercer than the First World War fighter', 'the Russian was as a soldier the first formidable opponent'.<sup>40</sup> On the German side, too, differences from the troops in the First World War were noticed. Faced with 'enemy fire of any kind' they were showing themselves significantly 'less tough', even though they had an 'absolute sense of superiority' over the Red Army. Rest breaks, a postal service that worked well, and cigarettes were important means of raising morale—especially after being under excessive stress.<sup>41</sup>

The optimistic German assessment of the situation was now being increasingly adjusted to the actual conditions in the eastern theatre. Although on the German side it was still thought 'encouraging' that the Red Army continued to stand up and do battle instead of withdrawing according to plan into the depth of its territory, the German military leadership, after the end of July 1941, privately began to accept that an early Soviet collapse could not be hoped for—as Brauchitsch admitted to those leading the operations.<sup>42</sup>

Hitler himself was 'very nervous' at the delay there had been, and was anxiously wondering: 'How much time have I left to finish Russia off, and how

<sup>38</sup> Richardson, *Sieg Heil*, 114 ff. The following also described their experiences as German soldiers: Schneiderbauer, *Adventures in my Youth*; Metelmann, *Through Hell for Hitler*, and Koschorrek, *Vergiß die Zeit der Dornen nicht*. See in general Schröder, 'Alltagsleben im Rußlandkrieg'; Latzel, 'Kriegsbriefe und Kriegserfahrung'; Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*; Humburg, *Das Gesicht des Krieges*; and more recently Stenzel, *Das Rußlandbild*.

<sup>39</sup> Sachße, *Roter Mohn*, 137, 150; see Knappe, *Soldat*, 212.

<sup>40</sup> Combat report of Pz. Grp. 3 of 29 June 1941, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 46; assessment of ObdH of 25 July 1941, BA-MA RH 20-17/4; report of supply officer of 23rd Inf. Div., BA-MA RH 26-23/91; Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 71 (30 July 1941).

<sup>41</sup> Report of Ia of Army Group South with III(mot.) AK of 31 July 1941, BA-MA RH 24-3/290.

<sup>42</sup> Conference with the chiefs of Army Groups South, Centre, and North on 25 July 1941, BA-MA RH 20-17/4; see Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 70 (22 July 1941), 76 (23 Aug. 1941).

much time do I still need?'<sup>43</sup> Three weeks later the commander-in-chief of Army Group Centre was already more sceptical than Brauchitsch: 'Unless the Russian collapses somewhere soon, the task of defeating him so that he is eliminated will be hardly be possible before the winter.'<sup>44</sup> This view was shared by Gen. Geyer, though he combined it with criticism of the military leadership: 'However, what many, spoilt by our successes so far, were expecting as a foregone conclusion—a victorious blitzkrieg, annihilation of the Soviet armed forces, and the collapse of the Soviet state—has not happened.'<sup>45</sup> The Luftwaffe chief of operations, Waldau, similarly noted in his diary: 'We are heading towards a winter campaign. The heavy burden of the war has begun. Belief in final victory remains.'<sup>46</sup> Yet the gap between wish and ability was never to be closed again on the German side.

The questions everybody was asking themselves were: what was the enemy's unbroken fighting spirit based on? Was it because the Soviet leaders were fighting with their backs to the wall? Or was it the Red Army men's fear of the fanatical commissars, or their ideological conviction?<sup>47</sup> An unambiguous answer was given by Geyer at the beginning of September 1941. The strength of the Russian resistance, he believed, was due not to 'good soldiering or a strong political or ideological idea', but solely 'to the barbaric, most brutal terror wielded by those in power, who know that everything is at stake for them'.<sup>48</sup> To his commanders Geyer had to admit that 'everything was at stake' for the German side too, though as the general commanding XXXXIII Army Corps was forced to recognize, the troops had already 'become a little lukewarm' by the end of July 1941 because of the heavy and unpleasant fighting.<sup>49</sup>

Another question the German leadership was asking itself was what should be done to counter the 'signs of psychological fatigue' being seen within the German army. The army commands realized that their explanatory and educational measures could during operations be only of an 'additional nature'. It was the task of their immediate superiors—despite all 'hardships and demands' of the ongoing fighting—to continue to ensure a 'positive attitude in the German soldier' through 'personal influence and educational work', an attitude against which even the intensive and varied Soviet propaganda

<sup>43</sup> Thilo's diary, entry for 25 July 1941, BA-MA N 664/3, and Field Marshal Bock, *Tagebuchnotizen*, ii, MGFA P-210 (25 July 1941), after a conversation with Keitel. See Förster, 'Ich bin der erste deutsche Soldat', 348.

<sup>44</sup> Thilo's diary (12 Aug. 1941), BA-MA N 664/3.

<sup>45</sup> Directive to his commanding officers of 5 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 26-137/16. In February 1941 he had been very optimistic. See *Die Weizsäcker-Papiere*, ii, 238.

<sup>46</sup> BA-MA RL 200/17 (9 Sept. 1941). The balance sheet of I. AK on 5 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 24-1/25. See the realistic and optimistic assessment of the situation by the OKW on 6 Aug. 1941, BA-MA RM 7/258.

<sup>47</sup> See Förster, 'Rußlandbild', 149, and (not quoted there) the informational order of the general commanding IX Army Corps of 16 Aug. 1941; Geyer, *Das IX. Armeekorps*, 116 ff.; Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 37 ff., and the war report by Dr Graf Podewils, n.d., BA-MA RS 4/933.

<sup>48</sup> Directive to his commanders of 5 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 26-137/16.

<sup>49</sup> See Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 70 (22 July 1941).

would bounce off.<sup>50</sup> After days of combat stress and physical exhaustion, commanders could still raise their troops' spirits again if, like Field Marshal von Reichenau, they showed themselves to their men 'at the very front line of the infantry'.<sup>51</sup> Gen. Geyer charged his commanders with 'the sacred duty' of strengthening the men's fighting spirit. 'To this end German resolve, German faith, and German readiness to fight have to be mobilized to the full. German ideology, German morale, German thinking, will then prove their superior strength.'<sup>52</sup> The aim of an ideological orientation of the German soldier, though in a different sense, was served also by Keitel's order of 12 September 1941; this reminded the troops of the directives of 19 May and demanded of them ruthless 'radical action' against 'Jewish Bolshevism',<sup>53</sup> as well as of Hitler's order of the day of 2 October 1941. This was read to the troops on the eastern front during the night preceding Army Group Centre's attack on Moscow (Operation TAIFUN).

In it Hitler not only raked up again the propaganda motif of this being a preventive war, but also did not fail to brand the Jews as the exponents of the Bolshevik system and Britain as the 'initiator of the whole war'. The German soldiers were praised: by their heroic achievements and privations they had at last created the conditions for 'shattering' the Red Army by a 'final massive strike' before the onset of winter.<sup>54</sup> Ernst Busch, commander-in-chief of the Sixteenth Army, was likewise 'full of praise for the spirit and the attitude of the troops under his command'.<sup>55</sup> Luftwaffe NCO G.S. did not actually record Hitler's order of the day in his diary, but understood his Berlin Sportpalast speech on 3 October 1941 the way it was intended—to wit, as an 'encouragement' to fight on. Especially as Hitler had claimed that the Soviet enemy had already been broken and would never rise again.

Simultaneously with the Wehrmacht supreme commander's appeal for the 'final great decisive battle' of 1941, directives on the 'ideological education and morale support' were issued for the army. These were regarded by

<sup>50</sup> Paper on the tasks of military-ideological leadership given at Second Army command Ic on 6 July 1941 and order of the chief of staff of 27 Aug. 1941, on military-ideological leadership, BA-MA RH 20-2/1090 and 1092 resp.; 50th Inf. Div., Ic, diary of 6 Sept. 1941, BA-MAA, RH 26-50/85.

<sup>51</sup> AOK 6 war diary, entry for 22 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 20-6/1019. Such a visit to the front line was said to have 'enthused and fired up' the troops. Timm C. Richter is preparing a biography of Reichenau.

<sup>52</sup> Directive of 5 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 26-137/16.

<sup>53</sup> BA-MA RW 4/v. 578 and BA-MA RH 26-99/21.

<sup>54</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 1756-8 (not in English). Richthofen considered the announcement that the final decisive battle was beginning to be 'considerably premature, and optimistic', Richthofen's diary, entry for 2 Oct. 1941, BA-MA N 671/8. A divisional supply officer believed that Hitler's appeal matched 'the seriousness of this hour and the greatness of this task', BA-MA RH 26-23/92. For the commander of Pz. Grp. 3, Gen. Hermann Hoth, the only thing that mattered was 'to annihilate the enemy and to break the will of the Red holders of power', speech on 30 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 441.

<sup>55</sup> Report by Col. Erwin Stolze, Amt Ausland/Abwehr, Abt. II, of 23 Oct 1941, NOKW-3147. Gen. Heinrici also took his hat off to the performance of his soldiers, see entry for 12 Sept. 1941 in Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*.

Brauchitsch as—together with weapons training—of increased importance. Convinced of the success of Operation TAIFUN, the leadership was already preparing itself mentally for the temporary cessation of operations and the adopting of winter positions.

As in his pre-war directions to the army and the general staff, the army commander-in-chief was concerned that the spirit and morale of the troops might be impaired by the increasing duration of the war. That was why 'the meaning of this war must be made clear to them. The soldier must know what is at stake in this struggle, and he must be convinced that this war must be, and will be, fought to its victorious end at any price.' This was the essence of the ideological education ordered by Brauchitsch, an education made up of national-political instruction and the discussion of political issues of the day. It was the task of company and battery commanders to educate their men in the sense that they were 'convinced bearers of National Socialist ideas' as well as of their weapons, and to 'maintain freshness and élan' in their units during the months with no combat in the vastnesses of Russia.<sup>56</sup>

These directives were intended by Brauchitsch only as an outline for the troops. After all, their implementation depended a lot on the different demands made on the units, at the front, or in the occupied territories, or in the replacement army. At the same time they were to ensure a 'uniform approach' to ideological education within the army. The topic was—as it had been in the order of 7 October 1940—subdivided into four main subjects: the German people, the German Reich, German *Lebensraum*, and National Socialism. The subject of 'Germany before the Peace of Westphalia' had been dropped in the meantime.<sup>57</sup>

After the great initial successes of TAIFUN the mood of the German leadership in October 1941 was still 'wonderfully relaxed and as good as it could be', and Gen. Alfred Jodl had compared the battle of Vyazma with that of Königsgrätz.<sup>58</sup> By mid-November, however, it was clear that the full-scale attack on Moscow had failed, and that harsh winter months were awaiting the troops. In the view of Field Marshal Hans-Günther von Kluge, commander-in-chief of the Fourth Army, the 'psychologically most critical moment of the campaign in the east' had already been in mid-October 1941. On the one hand, the troops were standing in the snow without winter clothing or accommodation,

<sup>56</sup> OKH/GenStdH/HWesAbt II, No. 3600/41 of 1 Oct 1941, BA-MA RH 19 III/488. The relevant 'brochure' containing instruction leaflets for the company commander to enable him to carry out the national-politics instruction was not distributed until March 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/489. Instruction on topical political questions is mentioned in the diary of NCO G.S. (10 Sept. 1941).

<sup>57</sup> On the application of these directives among the troops see BA-MA RH 26-97/ and RH 26-99/; 6. Pz. Div., Abt. Ic of 12 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 27-6/115; ObHGrSüd of 21 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 52/153; AOK 16, Ic of 20 Nov. 1941 and H. Gp. Nord, Ic of 1 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH 19 III/488. H. Gp. Nord and AOK 16 attached greater importance to morale support and leisure time activities for the troops than to their ideological education.

<sup>58</sup> Hewel diary, entries for 7 and 10 Oct. 1941; Wagner, *Der Generalquartiermeister*, 204 (5 Oct. 1941).

while on the other the tough opponent, the difficulties of the terrain, and leadership mistakes were rendering the advance of the weakened attacking groups more difficult.<sup>59</sup>

The commander of XXXXIII Army Corps was confronted everywhere with three complaints: why had the adjoining Second Panzer Army been sent into the attack without real cooperation with the Corps, causing such a high and unnecessary sacrifice of blood? 'Why are our men not receiving any fats but jam, when fat is the most important thing in the cold? Why are we being sent forward with such inadequate clothing into a winter combat whose demands are superhuman? Does no one realize what things are like here?'<sup>60</sup> The consultant psychiatrist of the Second Panzer Army recorded that on the train or at admission to field hospitals one often heard the phrase: 'We want to go home, we've had enough.' Dr Ernst regarded 'any privileged treatment of individual units with regard to accommodation or food supplies' as a danger to the morale of the troops.<sup>61</sup>

That was why on 16 November 1941 Brauchitsch made an urgent appeal to his officers to win the men's confidence through exemplary demeanour, indefatigable care for their welfare, and sympathy with their personal worries. The officer should share the rigours of the third winter of the war with his subordinates with the same frugality. Brauchitsch saw this as a prerequisite for not only maintaining but further consolidating the 'comradeship in battle between officers and men that has been tested and proven in the fighting to date'. 'Without wishing to encourage any egalitarianism', the army commander-in-chief pointed to the following areas that—along with the uniform ideological conviction already mentioned—crucially affected the spirit and morale of the troops: accommodation, food supplies, personal supplies (through the equivalent of the western forces' NAAFI or PX), the planning of leave, and the treatment of subordinates.<sup>62</sup> Messerschmidt regards this order as an 'outstanding testimony of best soldierly principles and long-tested "inherent" leadership skill'.<sup>63</sup>

Drawing on the experience of the fighting in the east, Brauchitsch simultaneously issued 'basic directives for the training of the army in the west'. The German army, he said, owed its colossal successes in this war not only to 'the superior skills of leaders and men', but also to the 'fighting spirit and belief in our National Socialist Reich and in the moral necessity of this war

<sup>59</sup> Army Group Centre war diary, entry for 15 Oct. 1941, BA-MA RH 19 II/411; Reinhardt, *Moscow: The Turning Point*, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Heinrici's diary for 4 Dec. 1941, quoted from Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 116–17.

<sup>61</sup> Occurrence report of 6 Mar 1942, BA-MA RH 50/146. This phrase was also mentioned on 2 Dec. 1941 by the foreign ministry's liaison officer with the Second Army, *ADAP*, E, i. 221 ff. The psychiatrist with PzAOK 2 also considered the 'kickback and bribery practices that are surreptitiously developing' in the rear area to be a 'considerable source of danger'.

<sup>62</sup> ObdH/HWesAbt and PA of 16 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 709. On the implementation see the order of ObHGrSüd of 21 Nov. 1941, *re* welfare for the troops in the winter of 1941, BA-MA RH 52/153.

<sup>63</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 259–60.



for the final achievement of our national freedom. From it stems the spirit and morale of the troops. The military skills of leaders and men help this idea to be victorious. Our faith in the idea was given us by the Führer. The army puts its strength and its life at risk for it, and as a convinced protagonist of the National Socialist idea it personifies it through its victories and its deaths. Blood and victory have won it its outstanding position in the state and in the hearts of the people.’<sup>64</sup> The tone of this last sentence had been first sounded by Brauchitsch in his order of 25 October 1939.

The army high command’s directives of 1 October 1941 on ideological education and welfare support were severely, though factually, criticized by at least one field officer. Lt.-Col. (GS) Groscurth, Ia officer of the 295th Infantry Division, proceeded not only from his own experience at the front and that of three regimental commanders, but, as Brauchitsch’s former Ic and chief of the army affairs department in the army high command, was intimately acquainted with the subject and with the leadership’s intentions. Groscurth criticized both the lack of clarity of the concepts ‘morale support’, ‘ideological education’, ‘national-political instruction’, and ‘propaganda’, as well as contradictory statements in the instruction leaflets, teaching brochures, and *Information for the Troops*.

Moreover, he claimed, the ordinary soldier was being confused by the multitude of directives and brochures issued from various quarters. This ‘mental supersaturation’ was making him ‘dull and indifferent. It is stopping him from “thinking for himself”.’ In the opinion of the 295th Division the soldier as defender of his fatherland was *eo ipso* a ‘political soldier’. Spiritual care and schooling of the troops should therefore be confined to ‘purely matters that have to do with being a soldier’. ‘By educating a man to be a brave, decent, and modest soldier I am also educating him to be a true National Socialist.’ Any schooling going beyond this was a matter for the school, the Party, and its divisions. The national-political instruction demanded could be provided, in comprehensible form, only by experienced company commanders. ‘In practice most officers are shirking this instruction.’ For educating a soldier, teaching him history, with special attention to the ‘great German soldiers, [was] better and more effective than any national-politics or instruction on topical issues’. Admittedly, there was no suitable history textbook for the troops. The troops wanted more historical novels, and pastoral care. The latter especially should be encouraged and guided. All the great soldiers in German history had, after all, been good Christians. Moreover, a ‘devout army’ could cope with a great deal of stress.

Groscurth not only criticized the existing programme of ideological education and spiritual welfare, as well as the remoteness from the troops of the OKW and OKH authorities responsible for them, but also put forward suggestions for a ‘simple soldierly’ education of the troops. He sent his report to

<sup>64</sup> ObdH/GenStdH/Ausb.Abt. Ia, No. 2800/41 of 24 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 2/2836.



the chief of staff of his superior formation, XXXXIV Army Corps.<sup>65</sup> While Groscurth chose the official channels upwards, Field Marshal Reichenau and Gen. Erich von Manstein, as well as Gen. Hoth, addressed themselves directly to their officers and men in order to remind them once more 'what was at stake'. The commanding officers had been at the Reich chancellery on 30 March 1941. In view of their responsibility for the 'spirit and morale' of the troops under their command, as well as following up Brauchitsch's directives of 1 October 1941, they took Hitler's demand that they also take the lead in the 'ideological struggle' seriously.

Although the well-known army orders of 10 October, 17 November, and 20 November are often quoted in a different context,<sup>66</sup> they were nevertheless seen, in the autumn of 1941, as means of 'ideological warfare'. After all, the purpose of the orders was to further unify the behaviour of the troops and to clear up their 'frequently still unclear ideas' about the real meaning of Operation BARBAROSSA. The heterogeneity of the forces can be gauged from the fact that a corporal of the 73rd Infantry Regiment (Eleventh Army) was proud of being allowed to take part in a 'campaign against Bolshevism' and to do his duty (4 Aug. 1941), while an NCO in the 70th Infantry Division (Sixth Army) was viewing his role rather critically: 'It just isn't a struggle of country against country, but one of two fundamentally different ideologies. Because two men are here quarrelling about their ideas, millions of people are having to shed their blood.'<sup>67</sup>

The struggle against the 'Jewish-Bolshevik system' was—according to Reichenau on 10 October 1941—giving rise to 'tasks for the troops that go beyond traditional straightforward soldiering. The soldier in the east is not only a fighter according to the rules of the art of war, but also the exponent of an uncompromising ethnic concept and the avenger of all the bestialities inflicted upon the German and kindred people.' Because Reichenau believed that not all soldiers were yet doing justice to their 'historic task' of mercilessly exterminating 'Jewish Bolshevism', the time had come for superior officers 'to awaken an awareness of the present struggle to free the German people once and for all from the Asiatic-Jewish peril'.<sup>68</sup>

Reichenau's attitude was by no means unique. Even before Hitler described his order on the conduct of troops in the east as 'excellent' and Brauchitsch on 28 October 1941 called on his commanders to emulate it, the commander-in-chief of Army Group South and the Wehrmacht commander Ukraine had already declared their approval and distributed the order within their command.<sup>69</sup> Other commanders described it as a 'mandatory guideline' or believed

<sup>65</sup> 295 Inf. Div. 1.GenSt.Offz, 2 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 26-295/18. It is not known whether the report ever reached the real addressees in the high commands.

<sup>66</sup> See for example *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 1210 ff.; Arnold, 'Die Eroberung', 46.

<sup>67</sup> *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 82 (24 Sept. 1941) and 76 (4 Aug. 1941).

<sup>68</sup> AOK 6, Abt. Ia, Az. 7 geh., 10 Oct. 1941, in *Ursachen und Folgen*, xvii, doc. 3166a; see AOK 6, KTB for 9 Oct. 1941, BA-MA RH 20-6/131.

<sup>69</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 1212-13.

that its arguments must be 'inoculated' into every soldier. Others again, such as Walter von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, commanding the 12th Infantry Division, passed it on to their troops without comment.<sup>70</sup> However, Reichenau himself had to discover, while visiting the troops, that his directive had not yet become common property among the soldiers. He therefore on 1 November 1941 once more demanded of superior officers that they see to it 'that every last man knows what is at stake here, and why measures are being taken in the east that would not be applied in civilized countries'.<sup>71</sup> This went unambiguously further than simply doing one's duty at the front or in the supreme command.<sup>72</sup>

It is no over-interpretation by the historian if he draws attention to the striking difference between the war in the west and that in the east. Only in Serbia did a comparable intermingling of military and ideological aims occur as it did in Operation BARBAROSSA—and even there not until there was active resistance to the German occupation. The plenipotentiary military commander in Serbia, Gen. of mountain troops Franz Böhme, similarly offered the revenge motif to his troops when they had to impose collective punishment on the population of Šabac: 'Your task is to be carried out in a strip of land, where in 1914 rivers of German blood flowed because of the treacherousness of Serbs, both men and women. You are avengers of those dead. A deterrent example must be made for the whole of Serbia, one that must hit home to the entire population most forcefully.'<sup>73</sup>

Like Reichenau, the commander-in-chief of the Seventeenth Army was convinced that the 'campaign in the east . . . [must] be fought right to the end differently from, for instance, the war against the French'. Hoth, too, had gained the impression on his visits to the troops that 'there was no *unified concept* of our tasks in the territory conquered by us, or of the resultant attitude as soldiers'. Because for him Hitler's concept alone was the 'guiding line' for the Wehrmacht, he reproduced that 'unambiguously' in his order. While regarding the military objectives of the campaign as attained, he still noted considerable shortcomings in the ongoing 'struggle against Bolshevism'. That was why Hoth demanded of his soldiers a sense of absolute superiority, of mastery, a conscious ideological contrast, no carelessness or benevolence towards partisans, no pity or softness towards the population, the merciless extermination of 'Bolshevik-Jewish agitators', and understanding for the executions of Jews being carried out by the SS. 'Their extermination is dictated by self-preservation. Any soldier

<sup>70</sup> 12. Inf. Div., Abt. Ic/Ia No. 607/41 geh., 17 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 26-12/82.

<sup>71</sup> BA-MA RH 26-100/37.

<sup>72</sup> Thus the Ia of the Fourth Army, Lt.-Gen. Hellmuth Stieff, viewed his task in Russia ('this crazy country') 'without any passion' (letter of 24 Nov. 1941), Stieff, 'Ausgewählte Briefe'. See the later memoirs of Stahlberg, *Bounden Duty*; Maizière, *In der Pflicht*; Feurstein, *Irrwege der Pflicht*. As early as 1 Aug. 1914 the 'Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens' had called on its members to engage themselves for the fatherland 'beyond the call of duty'. Twenty years later Himmler was demanding the same of his SS men.

<sup>73</sup> Order of 25 Sept. 1941, quoted from Manoschek, *Serbien*, 60.

criticizing these measures is lacking any memory of the past years of disruptive and treacherous activity by Jewish-Marxist elements among our own people.'

In the final section Hoth reminded the officers that they could have a decisive influence in moulding the attitude of the troops. The simple soldier often thinks more severely of his opponent than does his officer. That was what he had to bear in mind. 'A healthy sense of hatred and of rejection of the conditions encountered should not be suppressed, but should be strengthened.' This had also been Hitler's argument on 30 March 1941. Because the German officer had never occupied a more difficult or more responsible role in history than in the war against the Soviet Union, and because the struggle against a determined and tough adversary was going to continue through the winter as well, Hoth appealed to the officer upon whom the eyes of his soldiers were fixed: 'His invariably positive, exemplary, and inspiring leadership and his iron will as a leader must sweep away all faintheartedness.'<sup>74</sup>

Yet another troop commander thought it necessary to issue an order of his own for Operation BARBAROSSA. Like Reichenau, Manstein reminded the officers of his Eleventh Army that it was their task 'to keep the purpose of the present war constantly in their men's minds'. Since 22 June 1941, he argued, the German nation had been in a life-and-death struggle against the 'Jewish-Bolshevik system'. This must be 'exterminated once and for all. Never again must it be allowed to gain hold in our European *Lebensraum*.' For that reason Manstein demanded of his soldiers their active cooperation in the struggle 'against the enemy at our back', understanding for the 'harsh atonement visited on Jewry', a self-assured attitude, but a just treatment of the 'non-Bolshevik sections of the population'. Officers should act with all rigour 'against licence and self-interest, against decadent conduct and indiscipline, against any violating of soldierly honour'.

The German formations in the east suffered greatly from the Russian autumn weather, from inadequate food and clothing, from a lack of accommodation and means of lighting, from the fierce fighting, and from heavy losses of men and materiel. The higher command, for its part, had to admit to itself that the eastern army was at the end of its strength, and would never again regain the initial strength in qualitative terms it had enjoyed in June 1941. In the view of the chief of the general staff, Halder, the focus of the war was as a result shifting to maintaining morale and economic perseverance. On 23 November 1941 the commander-in-chief of Army Group Centre, Fedor von Bock, was still comparing the tactical situation outside Moscow to that on the Marne in 1914, and a few days later he feared 'a second Verdun'.

Although the 'combat strength of the eastern army [was] exhausted', Hitler, Halder, and Field Marshal Fedor von Bock urged pressing on with the attack, 'even at the risk of the troops burning themselves out'.<sup>75</sup> This was only a

<sup>74</sup> AOK 17, Ia, No. 0973/41 geh., 17 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 20-17/44.

<sup>75</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 618-19, 695, 699; Thilo diary, entry for 19 Nov. 1941, BA-MA N 664/3.

'question of will', Brauchitsch believed.<sup>76</sup> Already in October Reichenau and Manstein had called on their men to display hardness and accept extreme efforts and privations. Manstein urged the commanders in particular: 'The heavier the mental stress [from the high casualties suffered] on the soldiers entrusted to him, the higher must the leader carry his head!'<sup>77</sup> That, too, was part of his bravery – to be a reliable support for his troops and to maintain their sense of superiority over the enemy. But as a Waffen-SS officer recorded in his diary, a 'psychological sense of superiority and an inner assuredness that knew success to be certain' were lacking at the end of November 1941. His men were simply no longer convinced from the outset that they could cope with every task. The 'mood of the troops' had clearly declined, as the leadership was compelled to admit.<sup>78</sup> But the soldiers were not yet 'dulled and indifferent'. Commanders were striving to 'give fresh heart to these frozen-through, ill-clad, starving, unwashed, and filthy men'.<sup>79</sup> The official *Information for the Troops* No. 159 (December 1941) invoked 'the art of a positive attitude' towards the hard duties of the war, 'in order to win the peace by fighting'. Although the troops were 'east-weary', the commanders saw no chance for their soldiers of 'relaxing for a while in pleasanter surroundings'.<sup>80</sup>

In this situation, with the German eastern army burnt out, bled white, and frozen stiff, the Red Army launched a surprise full-scale attack. Gen. Reinhardt spoke of 'fresh hardships. Everything failing, troops at the end of their tether. Is everything lost? No, this cannot be!'<sup>81</sup> Gen. von Richthofen believed pessimistically that 'only luck and a lot of strokes of fate all coming together can save things'.<sup>82</sup> In order to raise the men's morale again the army high command issued an instruction that linked ideological warfare with welfare. Brauchitsch emphasized the importance of the 'inner mental attitude of every individual' in order to emerge victorious from the 'decisive struggle for an ideology'. Everybody must be 'imbued' with the knowledge that the army, though numerically inferior to the Red Army, had superior leadership and troops. It was the task of the officers to strengthen the 'inner resistance' of their men by means of 'inde-fatigable welfare in all spheres and constant spiritual guidance'.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, iii. 293 (18 Nov. 1941).

<sup>77</sup> Order of 21 Oct. 1941 to officers commanding army corps and divisions, BA-MA RH 19 I/75. In his order of 10 Oct. 1941 Reichenau had compared the demands in Russia to those of colonial wars, BA-MA RH 20-6/131. In an official Party statement Gauleiter Rudolf Jordan, Berlin, 1941, wrote 'On the meaning of this war'.

<sup>78</sup> Reinhardt, *Die Wende*, 172-4 n. 16.

<sup>79</sup> Heinrici diary, 5 Dec. 1941, quoted from Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 120. Gen. Reinhardt had to admit on 7 Dec. 1941 that he could not really lessen the 'heavy psychological stress', but could only 'give words of encouragement', BA-MA N 245/3. Craig Luther, Tehachapi, CA, is preparing a history 'from below' of the battle for Moscow.

<sup>80</sup> Reports of 6, 7, and 10 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH 24-44/52.

<sup>81</sup> Report of 9 Dec. 1941, *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Richthofen's diary, entry for 5 Dec. 1941, BA-MA N 671/8; Reinhardt, *Die Wende*, 164-5; *Deutschland im zweiten Weltkrieg*, ii. 275.

<sup>83</sup> Tasks of the eastern army in the winter of 1941/2, point VIII, 3, in KTB OKW, i. 1080-1 (8 Dec. 1941). Halder on 21 Dec. 1941 told Army Group Centre: 'We are superior, the Russian succeeds only through sheer numbers,' repr. in *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 721-2.

The troops, however, attached less importance to 'guidance' than to 'mental diversions and having their minds taken off' the hardships of their daily lives. The most helpful things of all in this respect were newspapers from home and letters from their families, especially those who were suffering from Allied bombing raids.<sup>84</sup> In many places the men had very little opportunity for reading, as from 1500h onwards they sat in the dark in winter, as there were no means of lighting in bunkers in field positions or for local billets.<sup>85</sup> Although the eastern army had, operationally and tactically, reached the end of its strength after all its victories,<sup>86</sup> Hitler was from the strategic viewpoint 'in very good heart'.<sup>87</sup> But he no longer considered Brauchitsch, who had a serious heart complaint, capable of 'compelling' the troops in the east 'to fanatical resistance in holding their positions'.<sup>88</sup> His personal relationship of trust in the army commander-in-chief had already been badly shaken since 5 November 1939.<sup>89</sup> On 10 December Hitler relieved Brauchitsch of his post and assumed personal command of the army. The reason was not, as Halder claimed after the war, that Hitler believed he could educate the army in the National Socialist spirit better than any general,<sup>90</sup> but his declared aim of 'bringing the will to hold firm into every unit'.<sup>91</sup>

The chief of the general staff similarly felt an army commander-in-chief could be done without; through his direct contact with Hitler he believed he would be able to assert the army's interests more effectively than in the past. In a letter to the commanders-in-chief and commanders Halder declared: 'We can and should be proud that the Führer himself is now at the head of our army.'<sup>92</sup> The same view was held also by the Gruppenleiter II in the army's organization department, Maj. Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg. The post of army commander-in-chief, he believed, had been an obstacle. Thanks to the 'new solution' the general staff was working better than before in harnessing the nation's entire strength to the army's 'decisive struggle'.<sup>93</sup> To win this his chief expected, from top to bottom, directly and undiminished, a 'single

<sup>84</sup> XXXIV. AK, Ic of 30 Dec. 1941 *re* experience in the eastern campaign, BA-MA RH 24-44/185.

<sup>85</sup> PzAOK 3, Ic/Z of 7 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 441; Kuby, *Mein Krieg*, 377 (14 Dec. 1943).

<sup>86</sup> See Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 122 (6 Dec. 1941).

<sup>87</sup> Hewel, diary entry for 8 Dec. 1941. With Japan as an ally, 'we cannot now lose the war'.

<sup>88</sup> Hitler's so-called hold-on order of 16 Dec. 1941, which in Gen. Reinhardt's opinion brought 'clarity at last'. BA-MA N 245/3. See Reinhardt, *Die Wende*, 220; KTB OKW, i. 1084 (18 Dec. 1941).

<sup>89</sup> KTB OKW, i. 951 (8 Nov. 39).

<sup>90</sup> Halder, *Hitler*, 49-50.

<sup>91</sup> As Halder himself noted in his official diary on 20 Dec. 1941, the will to hold out should also be hammered into the German people to enable them to stand up, inwardly, to this hard test in their struggle for life, Halder, *Diaries*, iii. 593.

<sup>92</sup> 25 Dec. 1941. Quoted from *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 718; see TB of ObH-GrSüd of 20 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH 24-3/41; *Weizsäcker-Papiere*, ii. 286 (14 Jan. 1942). Gen. Heinrici, on the other hand, was sceptical. See Kroener, 'Fromm', 422-7.

<sup>93</sup> Letter of 11 Jan. 1941, quoted from Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 237 (not in English). Capt. Thilo, GenStdH/Op. Abt., likewise welcomed the new solution (20 Dec. 1941), BA-MA N 664/3.

will' to prevail—the will of the Führer'.<sup>94</sup> Commanding officers at army group and army level would have to get used to the fact that their new commander-in-chief, as an 'authority-wielding personality', would take a hand in orders on tactical details, and would not tolerate 'fault-finders, know-alls, or those unable to cut loose from [old] ideas'.<sup>95</sup>

How then were the emerging symptoms of 'excessive mental fatigue, physical weariness, and apathy' among the troops to be countered? In order to master the operational crisis 'for the sake of the future of our Reich and nation', commanders had no other choice than 'applying the ultimate in will'.<sup>96</sup> Neither they nor Hitler were willing to hoist the white flag before the Red Army. Although the apathy of the troops was increasing, and they were at times even panicky and unstable, they nevertheless displayed the will to hold on, as demanded from above, in the face of all personal, material, and meteorological hardships. 'The First World War officers are telling everyone that what our troops are going through in this campaign, especially recently, far exceeds the demands of the First World War. To hold on for months in contact with the enemy, without being relieved, in very hard fighting in freezing cold, with inadequate supplies and far from enough food, and with heavy casualties—that is an ordeal for the troops that people back home cannot properly imagine.'<sup>97</sup>

Hitler correctly perceived this mood, and in his New Year 1942 order of the day commended the bravery, readiness for sacrifice, and death-defying courage of the German soldiers.<sup>98</sup> The leadership was also able to glean from the soldiers' letters home that, while railing against 'the incompetent generals', they were exempting the Führer from all criticism. The operations department's 'front-line observer' thought this was decisive: 'The fact that in the ordinary soldier's mind the change in the high command is linked with the conviction of a fundamental turn for the better, is a gain for which no personal sacrifice is too high.'<sup>99</sup>

In mid-January 1942 Hitler made concessions to the military criticism of his operational decision to hold the front at any cost;<sup>100</sup> the obdurate defence was relaxed. Needless to say, the second withdrawal in this war—the first had been

<sup>94</sup> Halder letter to his closest aides in the command posts on 6 Jan. 1942, *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 718, 723–4. See Halder's order of 10 June 1942, *re* experience in battle, points 1 and 2, BA-MA RH 2/2853.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from chief of the Sixteenth Army staff to his corps commanders, 5 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH 20–16/80. See Halder's order of 10 June 1942, *re* experience in battle, BA-MA RH 2/2853; Groß, 'Das Dogma der Beweglichkeit'.

<sup>96</sup> 'Strictly personal' letter from commander of 97th Light Infantry Division, Lt.-Gen. Maximilian Fretter-Pico, to his commanders, 18 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH 26–97/31.

<sup>97</sup> Meier-Welcker, *Aufzeichnungen eines Generalstabsoffiziers*, 147 (5 Jan. 1942). In much the same vein Gen. Heinrici wrote to his wife, repr. in Heinrici, *Ein deutscher General*, 138, 163 (6 Jan. and 12 May 1942). On a comparison between the two world wars see Heusinger's judgement of 1952, repr. in Förster, 'The German Military's Image of Russia', 129.

<sup>98</sup> BA-MA RH 22/19. On 26 May 1942 he created the Eastern Campaign Medal.

<sup>99</sup> Report of Maj. Oehmichen on his visit to the Fourth Army at the front, 9–24 Feb. 1942, BA-MA RW 4/v. 305; Reinhardt, *Die Wende*, 255–6.

<sup>100</sup> Order of 15 Jan. 1942, in *KTb OKW*, ii. 1268–9.



in Cyrenaica—had to be carried out in a way ‘worthy of the German army’. The German soldier’s sense of superiority, as well as his ‘fanatical will’ to inflict the greatest possible damage on the Soviet enemy even during a backward movement, was to be maintained. In point of fact, the Red Army did not succeed in creating a ‘Cannae’ for Army Group Centre outside Moscow. The fact that the German eastern army was spared the fate of Napoleon’s army in 1812 through the bravery of its soldiers was claimed by Hitler as entirely his own personal merit, seeing that they had put into practice ‘his firm will to hold on, cost what it may’.<sup>101</sup> As yet, Hitler had no reason to doubt the morale of his troops. The winter crisis of 1941/2 does not therefore represent a ‘landmark in the development of political-ideological schooling and education’ in the Wehrmacht, as has frequently been claimed on the strength of apologetic comments by former generals.<sup>102</sup> The soldiers, for their part, were hoping that their new commander-in-chief would ‘somehow pull it off’.<sup>103</sup> Yet the winter crisis of 1941/2 was about Germany’s ‘victory or defeat’; Hitler’s order to hold on outside Moscow has been compared to ‘Frederick the Great’s decision at Leuthen in 1757’.<sup>104</sup> A year later the commander of the replacement army still believed that Hitler had ‘more strategic skill in his little finger’ than all the generals put together.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 127 (23 May 1942).

<sup>102</sup> Thus most recently Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 46.

<sup>103</sup> See Heinrich, *Ein deutscher General*, 143 (5 Feb. 1942).

<sup>104</sup> Thilo’s diary, entry for 21 Dec. 1941, BA-MA N 664/3.

<sup>105</sup> Hassell, *Die Hassell-Tagebücher*, 339 (13 Nov. 1942).



## V. Between Optimism and Defiance: War Fought under Military-Ideological Leadership

REGARDLESS of the lost expectation of a rapid collapse of the Soviet Union and regardless also of the global extension of the European war in December 1941, Hitler was determined to bring the whole war in the east to a strategic decision.<sup>1</sup> To 'clear things up there'<sup>2</sup> he said, there was, no other *military* alternative than to continue the war with 'full vigour'.<sup>3</sup> The option of a *political* conclusion to the German–Soviet conflict was not even considered. Hitler's uncompromising attitude was based primarily on ideology, and secondarily on strategy. He viewed the global war against the 'Jewish-capitalist-Bolshevik world'<sup>4</sup> as a life-and-death struggle, one that could be seen through after the failure of BARBAROSSA only if the military and economic 'resilience of our *Lebensraum*'<sup>5</sup> was strengthened by the conquest of the Donets basin and the Caucasian oilfields. That was why in 1942 Hitler once more staked everything on a single card, even though the manpower and material situation of the Wehrmacht would allow only an offensive by one army group in the southern sector of the eastern front.<sup>6</sup>

This self-imposed compulsion to win through to victory led not only to its own logic in assessing his own forces and those of his Soviet opponent, but also to an emphatic optimism that victory over the Soviet Union was possible in a second attempt. This change of mood at the top was felt all the way down to the lowest level. 'I find it very clever', infantryman Erich Kuby noted in his diary, 'the way the waves of optimism are being carried through to the people in a quite incomprehensible way, so that, after the low around Christmas, the despondent faces are now everywhere perking up a bit again. It's particularly brilliant, that this has been achieved not by referring to specific subjects such as Singapore [captured by the Japanese]

<sup>1</sup> See Wegner in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Hitler on 23 Dec. 1941. Stab OKH, minute of 28 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH 14/4.

<sup>3</sup> This was the unanimous judgement on 9 Jan. 1942 of State Secretary von Weizsäcker and Gen. Geyer. See *Weizsäcker-Papiere*, ii. 284.

<sup>4</sup> Hitler's diary at the turn of 1941/2, BA-MA RH 22/19, and speech in the Berlin Sportpalast on 30 Jan. 1942, Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 826 (not in English). Capt. Wilm Hosenfeld in Warsaw found Hitler's speech disappointing because he had failed to answer the 'most pressing questions' on the war, repr. in Hosenfeld, *Ich versuche jeden zu retten*, entry for 30 Jan. 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Hitler and Raeder unanimously on 26 Aug. 1942, *Lagevorträge*, 405, 407. See Goebbels's article 'Seid nicht allzu gerecht', *Das eiserne Herz*, 31 May 1942.

<sup>6</sup> See Wegner in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 863.

or suchlike . . . No, the mood is being steered generally and as though rising from the depth of the heart. I can see from a letter from Mum that this wave has not passed her by either.<sup>7</sup>

Early German military successes, such as the reconquest of Cyrenaica (in February) and the Kerch peninsula (in May), and the break-out by heavy surface ships through the Channel (also in February), further contributed to the near-catastrophe of the winter of 1941/2 being soon forgotten. They also returned to Goebbels 'the inner equilibrium that had been upset in the winter. If spring and summer continue as they have begun, we can look towards the future full of hope.'<sup>8</sup>

Of course there were also critical voices, such as that of the Ia of the 251st Infantry Division, who made a clear distinction between military successes and a victorious conclusion of the war. Meier-Welcker believed that wish had always been a bad father to thought, 'if indeed the concept of "thought" is derived from thinking . . . How many people are capable of thinking anyway? They "believe", wish, hope, are carried along by moods, and do not see the wood for the trees.'<sup>9</sup> However, the bloody victory that annihilated Marshal Semen Konstantinovich Timoshenko's Soviet south-west front near Kharkov at the end of May 1942, together with the other successes, again strengthened Hitler's self-confidence and that of the military leadership in the superiority of German strategic skill.

In the area of *ideological* warfare the winter 1941/2 crisis did not mark any fundamental change. The 'troops' low morale' that had been diagnosed earlier was considered to have been overcome by mid-February 1942. The men on the eastern front themselves believed they had 'pulled it off', and their confidence increased.<sup>10</sup> For that reason the indoctrination of the troops from above was not intensified, as was Messerschmidt's belief as late as 1969.<sup>11</sup> Ideological education was not initially a top priority in 1942; this was given instead to the 'untiring provision of welfare' for the troops through 'indefatigable personal effort by all commanders and officers' as an 'indispensable prerequisite' for strengthening the troops' inner resilience.<sup>12</sup> Needless to say, the National Socialist ideology, too, was seen as important for the mental attitude of the troops; but this was not a new note sounded by Brauchitsch. The army leadership was more concerned about the physical 'rehabilitation' of the battle-weary soldiers than about their ideological instruction. That was why, in view of the operational situation in the east and the varying conditions in

<sup>7</sup> Kuby, *Mein Krieg*, 214 (26 Feb. 1942). At that time the Fourth Army was still fighting for its survival.

<sup>8</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iv, 28 May 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Meier-Welcker, *Aufzeichnungen eines Generalstabsoffiziers*, 140 (20 Nov. 1941), 148 (12 Jan. 1942).

<sup>10</sup> See the findings of sampling of soldiers' letters by IX Army Corps for March 1942, BA-MA RH 27-6/116.

<sup>11</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 307.

<sup>12</sup> Directives of the army C-in-C of 8 Dec. 1941, in *KTB OKW*, i. 1080-1; see his order of 1 Oct. 1941, see Ch. IV of this section, and Kdr. 6. Pz. Div. of 1 Mar. 1942, BA-MA RH 27-6/116, BL 183, Rs.

the occupied territories, it refrained for the time being from distributing to all company commanders the new leaflets for national-politics instruction on the subject of 'The German people'.<sup>13</sup>

The same line was taken by the Wehrmacht high command's *Mitteilungen für das Offizierkorps* [Information for the Officer Corps], first published in January 1942 and indeed not then with an ideological main feature, but with a leader on 'Welfare and Duty'. The OKH similarly published a new periodical in January 1942, called *Erziehung und Bildung im Heer* [Education and Guidance in the Army]. This was addressed to the officer as the 'educator of his men', and hoped 'to instruct him, give him much to think about, and provide a stimulus for intellectual discussion and further education'.

The high commands as well as the command authorities in the field made great welfare efforts in order to raise and consolidate the fighting morale of the troops. R&R centres were set up at corps level, reading matter, musical instruments, and radios and gramophones were distributed, and entertainment by travelling 'Strength through Joy' groups was organized. Thus Army Group North reported in December 1941 that its two armies had, together, received 910 board games, 600 packs of cards, 450 mouth organs, 203 accordions, 149 plucked string instruments, one trombone, 2,500 gramophone records, 65 boxes of books from the 'Rosenberg Spende' (a nationwide collecting of comforts for the troops), as well as 5,300 'soldiers' journals for leisure time', 5,000 'soldiers' journals for occupational advancement', and 8,000 'knapsack books'.<sup>14</sup> This was not a lot, considering that a total of 5,674 companies had to be provided for. Moreover, no provision had yet even been thought about for the troops of the Rear Area North command.

The newly established R&R centres for the troops close to the front line naturally proved enormously popular, even though, given the continuing tense tactical situation in the east, not many men were given the chance to recover there from the hardships of combat, and to get ample sleep and plenty of baths.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, these periods were 'the best substitute for leave', which most of the troops had to do without in the winter of 1941/2. Others did not have such an urgent need of this kind of diversion and relaxation. Flak gunner G.S. at the airfield at Gatchina near Leningrad had enough time and opportunity to go to the cinema nearly twice a week.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> OKH/Gen zbV/HWesAbt (II) of 12 Mar. and 21 Apr. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/489.

<sup>14</sup> Telex of 28 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH 19 III/488; see PzAOK 3, Ic/Z of 22 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 440. The framework order had come from HWesAbt, issued on 24 Nov. 1941.

<sup>15</sup> See the occurrence report of AOK 16 of 7 Apr. 1942 on the first batch of 38 men sent to the recreation centre in Skrugy and a subsequent one of the 246th Inf. Div. of 7 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH 19 III/489, RH 26-246/44, and basic instructions of 2 Jan. and 9 Nov. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/490. A sum of RM10,000 was made available for the initial equipment of each centre. See Ch. III of this section. 'Troop welfare' had been seen as a means of maintaining the combat spirit of the army as early as during the First World War. See the guidelines issued on 23 May 1918 for setting up soldiers' centres on the western front, BA-MA RM 5/3822.

<sup>16</sup> Pz. Grp. 3, Abt. Qu/Ic/Z of 26 Dec. 1941, *re* troops' welfare, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 441, and BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 446 (2 June 1942). Diary of NCO G.S.

The leitmotif of the first order of the new acting commander-in-chief of the army was likewise not the ideology of the Third Reich, even though Field Marshal Keitel had assumed his post with the motto of 'implanting the Führer's thoughts in the army and bringing it closer to the Führer'. Of course, National Socialist ideology was seen as *one* of the foundations of the striking power and discipline of the forces, but the emphasis of this order of 22 May 1942 on the 'internal structure of the forces' was on the relationship of trust between officer, NCO, and ordinary soldier. This, it argued, could best be established if the officer was just and caring, if he took grievances and complaints by his men seriously, and if he remedied any valid grievances.<sup>17</sup>

This repeated emphasis on traditional principles of training and leadership suggests that the 'spiritual father' of this and the following order can be seen as not Field Marshal Keitel, but the officers in the OKH's personnel and army affairs department. Keitel's order of 31 May 1942 on 'The Responsibility of the German Officer' went one step further in the direction of National Socialism.<sup>18</sup> This responsibility, it argued, consisted in the officer 'letting his men feel and realize, from innermost conviction, that the very existence of the Reich is at stake'. That was why the officer should be able to educate his soldiers into being 'convinced representatives' of the National Socialist ideology.

Shortly before the opening of the summer offensive in the east Keitel issued two orders aiming at ideological harmony between the army and Hitler. As a result of these, the army's acting commander-in-chief believed on 1 June 1942 that 'the will to hold on and the belief in final victory would be decisively strengthened both at the front and at home'.<sup>19</sup> It is not really quite clear why Keitel should, at that moment, have doubted the Wehrmacht's will to see the struggle through to the end, considering that the troops were at the same time being told by the Wehrmacht operations staff that their 'sense of superiority over any opponent had never been lost', even if the navy and Luftwaffe were numerically inferior.<sup>20</sup> This assessment was also shared by the otherwise critical Ia of the 251st Infantry Division, who ranked the performance of the German 'eastern fighter' above all others even though, in the annihilation struggle they had been commanded to fight, they experienced 'things that we in no way approve of'.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> OKH/HWesAbt, No. 2500/42, and PA (2) Ia, No. 6190/42, BA-MA RH 13/No. 6; see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 307–8. On 1 Feb. 1943 the Inspectorate of Army Education and Training issued a 'Guidance sheet on reports—requests—complaints', BA-MA RH 12-1/v. 120.

<sup>18</sup> OKH/PA 2 Ib/Ia, No. 6350/42, BA-MA N 91/9.

<sup>19</sup> OKH/PA (2) Ia, No. 6290/42, repr. in Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. No. 1. This order was passed on by Bormann to the Gauleiters for their personal information, BA NS 6/142.

<sup>20</sup> 'Die Wehrkraft der Wehrmacht im Frühjahr 1942', BA-MA RM 8/1619. See Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, iv, 30 May 1942: 'Now, however, the German soldier has regained his self-confidence. He once more correctly assesses the Bolshevik soldier and feels superior to him in every respect.'

<sup>21</sup> Meier-Welcker, *Aufzeichnungen eines Generalstabsoffiziers*, 158 (2 Mar. 1942).

On 11 June 1942 Keitel supplemented his orders by pointing out that National Socialist ideology was the foundation of the 'ideological leadership of the army', on the basis of which the troops must again and again have explained to them 'what this war was about'. 'A soldier who *knows* what is at stake and hence *understands* the necessity of this struggle, will also display hardness and resolution in battle and therefore accept any sacrifice for the sake of victory.'<sup>22</sup> This demand was elevated by Hitler into the maxim that the officers responsible, especially those on the general staff, must be educated into 'fanatical belief in the ideas' of National Socialism.<sup>23</sup> Himmler, too, attached great importance to the mental attitude of his SS men, to their ideological conviction, and to their persistent training. 'We can get everything out of them [our splendid men] if we educate them, if time and again we show them the great principle.' This the Reich leader SS defined as a struggle of ideology and race—on the one hand the fanatical 'leadership ranks of the subhuman, Jew, commissar, and *politruk*', on the other 'Germany with its officer corps and we with our leaders' corps', convinced Bolsheviks against convinced National Socialists, Huns against Teutons.<sup>24</sup> In terms of content the orders contained nothing new. Nevertheless, the tasks of 'ideological education and welfare' were upgraded in the army when, in mid-July 1942, they were renamed 'military-ideological leadership' (*wehrgeistige Führung*) and placed in the organizational charge of a special official, a *Bearbeiter*. He was to take on some of the workload of the Ic. However, responsibility for the education of the troops, both officers and other ranks, continued to remain with the unit commander, whose primary adviser for the uniform orientation of the officer corps was his adjutant, the IIa.<sup>25</sup>

The army high command order of 15 July 1942, which defined *wehrgeistige Führung*, was addressed to a force in the east that had already reflected on morale support to its men. While Army Group South was concentrating on an advance towards the Caucasus and the Volga, the two army groups at a standstill began to prepare their men mentally for the fact that they would be facing a second winter in Russia. They did not want to be taken by surprise again by the problem of 'How do we get through the winter?'<sup>26</sup> Although in the south the eastern army was further forward than it had been a year before, it had lost hope that the war would soon be over.

<sup>22</sup> OKH/PA (2) Ia, No. 6660/42, BA-MA RH 19 III/489. A year later the Party believed that it had initiated this order, conference with Bormann on 20 May 1943, BA NS 8/188.

<sup>23</sup> Thus on the day of Halder's dismissal, 24 Sept. 1942, Halder, *Diaries*, 670.

<sup>24</sup> Speech to the senior SS leaders' corps on 9 June 1942, repr. in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 150. On 13 July in Stettin Himmler took the same strong line, see Stein, *Geschichte der Waffen-SS*, 113-15. On the training of the SS generally, Matthäus, Kwiet, and Förster, *Ausbildungsziel Judenmord?*

<sup>25</sup> OKH/HWesAbt, No. 250/7.42 of 15 July 1942, repr. in Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 2. The new-old subject of 'military-ideological guidance' had already been touched upon in the April issue of *Mitteilungen für das Offizierkorps*. The process of decision-making and adjustment within the OKH for the creation of a special 'officer for ideological education' had likewise begun much earlier, BA-MA RH 13/1.

<sup>26</sup> See the proposals of AOK 16 and of Army Grp. North on ideological care during the winter of 1942/3 of 20 June and 5 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/489.

Army Group Centre did not content itself with an intensified morale support for the troops in the traditional sense, but made deliberate efforts to guide its men also 'in terms of thinking'. Because they were suffering from the protraction of the war and their separation from home, and seemed to be subject to inwardly and outwardly conditioned mood swings, they should be given not only a clear picture of the military situation but also have 'a solid yardstick for assessing anything that happens'.<sup>27</sup> Only when the soldiers understood this war as a 'crucial period in the historical development of our nation' would their 'will to fight be steely and their thinking be directed to victory and beyond'. While attitude and example were the most powerful means of such 'mental guidance', the spoken word would be an effective complement. 'The right person to speak . . . is the leader of the unit himself'. But beyond the available 'information sheets', 'notes', and 'booklets' the company commander should—the army group suggested to the OKH—take the advice of a specially able officer from his own unit at division level; the latter would inform him of the most important regulations and, in special cases, call for help from authorities at home and from the Party.

However, Army Group Centre did not confine itself simply to a proposal for deepening 'ideological guidance', strengthening practical welfare, and extending earlier measures, but immediately mounted a field trial among the combat troops. To this end it posted Maj. Freiherr Wilhelm von Lersner to the Third Panzer Army from 21 July 1942; over four weeks, with four divisions, he gave a total of twenty-one lectures and led countless discussion groups in a specially created course for sixty company commanders in Gzhatsk.<sup>28</sup>

Lersner was especially suited to this task, by motivation, educational background, and experience. Born in 1885, he had been an active officer in the First World War, had left the army as a cavalry captain, had joined the 'liberation struggle of German prisoners of war' in 1918–20, had been a businessman until 1936, and was subsequently departmental head in the Reich Office for National Socialist War Victim Welfare, and a *Reichsfachschaft* speaker for the NSDAP. On 1 April 1937 Lersner had joined the Party (membership No. 4633688) and a year later had become an officer on the reserve. Reactivated as a cavalry captain (special duties), he served first with the provisional HQ of XX Army Corps in Danzig and later in the OKH's inspectorate of education and training. On 8 April 1942 Lersner had been posted to Army Group Centre.<sup>29</sup> Summing up his visit to the Third Panzer Army at the front, he recorded that the troops had considered the army group's directive of 17 July 1942 to be a 'step forward'. The men were 'ripe' for taking an ideological view of the

<sup>27</sup> OKH/PA 2 Ib/Ia, No. 6350/42, BA-MA N 91/9.

<sup>28</sup> Report of PzAOK 3, Abt. Ic/AO of 21 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 446. Between 15 July and 30 Dec. 1942 Lersner gave a total of 97 lectures (list of 15 Apr. 1943), BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>29</sup> Information from Deutsche Dienststelle Berlin and BA Branch Kornelimünster, of March 1998; records of the Berlin Document Center (BDC) in the NA, and personnel sheet NSFO of 6 July 1944, BA NS 6/370.



war. Simplicity and faith were 'the best form of ideological guidance, the kind the forces and the young officers need in the face of the harsh demands of the struggle'. Grievances about individual matters should be met by pointing to the greatness of the idea of victory. The soldier would then recognize belief in the National Socialist ideology as his 'best and strongest mental weapon'.

Structurally, the task of 'intellectual guidance' of the troops could only be tackled properly by an officer who held no other post. He would need to come from within the division, and should have been in front-line combat. Major Lersner stuck to this view, even though some officers in the field objected that there was no need for a special divisional welfare officer, that nothing should be taken away from the unit commander, 'and that anyway no suitable officer could be spared'. At the beginning of September 1942 Lersner was once again at the front, where the morale of the troops was then under strain since they had to retreat under Soviet pressure.<sup>30</sup> It was found that the men who were particularly susceptible to the new kind of 'mental guidance' were 'those who had not suffered the psychological blow of their own lines being retaken, but those deployed for attack and restoring the situation'. Lersner regarded as remarkable the courage of a battalion commander who told him: 'The soldier must be involved in an attack again. A double retreat, during last winter and again now, has a demoralizing effect because the German soldier needs offensive, not defensive, combat to give him self-confidence.'

That was why Lersner thought it important to draw his superiors' attention to the fact that timely instruction of the troops was necessary especially in a difficult situation, as 'every understanding of how things are connected [helps] overcome the empty feeling of having to hang on in a thin fighting line without any reserve at the rear, without the prospect of having time to discuss it'. While the *Information for the Troops*, No. 214 of August 1942, met the army group's demand for an 'unshakeable yardstick', it failed to convey any clear picture of the situation.

On 8 September Army Group Centre became doubly active. Its commander-in-chief, Kluge, implemented the OKH ruling of 15 July 1942. He himself attached 'the very greatest importance' to the military-ideological guidance of the troops and to the selection of suitable officers for these tasks in every division, seeing that the heavy defensive fighting in the impending winter would put the men under great psychological strain. In his order he announced that, when visiting the troops, he would get each commanding officer to inform him on the state of 'military-ideological support'.<sup>31</sup> To ensure uniform practice in 'ideological guidance' within his army group area, his chief of staff, Maj.-Gen. Otto Wöhler, that same day distributed the Third Panzer Army's first report

<sup>30</sup> PzAOK 3, Gruppe Ic/AO, Report No. 2 of 9 Sept. 1942, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407; on the military situation see *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 1057.

<sup>31</sup> ObHGr Mitte, Abt. Ic/AO No. 1039/42, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. The concepts 'military-ideological guidance' (*wehrgeistige Führung*) and 'military-ideological care' (*wehrgeistige Betreuung*) were used by him as synonyms.



on experience, as a 'suitable basis'.<sup>32</sup> In his covering letter he pointed out that 'education into being a straight and decent soldier' must be a decisive point. Because the German 'basic soldierly concepts' seemed to him threatened in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, Wöhler called on the officers at all levels 'to keep the honourable shield of the German soldier clean'—despite all the bitterness in combat and the special conditions in the east.

The first conference of divisional welfare officers (*Divisionsbetreuungsoffiziere*, DBO) was held in the Third Panzer Army's sector, at Vyazma, on 17 and 18 September 1942. It was for the greater part conducted by Lersner, who alone gave four lectures—development of the task of intellectual guidance; the contrasts between propaganda, morale support, and ideological guidance; the yardstick and fundamental ideas for the military-political struggle; and war as a spiritual and ideological confrontation. The commander-in-chief of the Panzer Army, Gen. Hans-Georg Reinhardt, likewise stressed the importance of the task taken on by the DBO. He should have a mind and heart for the ordinary soldier, have an inner devotion to National Socialism, and carry within himself the 'unshakeable confidence that this war can end only in victory for us'.<sup>33</sup>

The initiative of Army Group Centre, approved as it was by the OKH, was followed by other command authorities in the east.<sup>34</sup> However, the Wehrmacht commander Ostland, Gen. Walter Braemer, took a different path. For the purpose of 'ideological education and military-ideological guidance' of officers and officials his Ic organized weekly public lectures in Riga by well-known figures from the Party, the Wehrmacht, or the universities. Braemer moreover requested the army group to detail veteran front-line soldiers to give talks; they were to speak on 'the daily experience of being in the very front line, the harshness of the fighting, and the spirit of the front-line soldiers, as laying a duty on men serving in the rear area' (i.e. Lithuania and Latvia).<sup>35</sup>

By the middle of December the chief of staff of the Wehrmacht C-in-C Ostland was able to send a positive report to Army Group North about the fortnight of talks by 'front-line speakers'. Initially the eleven soldiers in question had met with scepticism, as the audience had been expecting propaganda speeches. 'Only the talks themselves, and the effect the men from the front line had, [had] aroused great involvement in every audience.' Particularly moved had been those who had been on the front line in the First World War.

<sup>32</sup> H.Gr.Mitte, Abt. Ic/AO No 1036/42 of 8 Sept. 1942, *ibid.*; see Berghahn, *NSDAP*, 35–6. The report also went, for information, to the OKH which because it conformed with its directives distributed it on 20 Sept. 1942 to the remaining army groups in the east and in France, as well as to the army commands in Norway and the Balkans.

<sup>33</sup> BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 446. On Reinhardt see Clasen, *Generaloberst Hans-Georg Reinhardt*.

<sup>34</sup> See AOK 9 of 19 Sept. 1942 sgd. Model, of 21 Sept. 1942 sgd. Krebs, and H. Grp. Nord of 27 Sept. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/489; AOK 4 of 24 Sept. sgd. Heinrici, and of 20 Oct. 1942, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>35</sup> WB Ostland, Ic of 29 Sept. 1942, BA-MA H 19 III/489; see H. Grp.'s reply of 24 Oct. 1942, *ibid.*

Questions from the audience were, naturally enough, about the 'enemy situation, the fighting worth of the Russians, their equipment and morale', but also about daily life at the front. The speakers, for their part, observed that comradeship and discipline were better at the front. They had been 'taken aback to find NCOs, especially the sergeants, wearing special-issue uniforms'.<sup>36</sup>

On 11 December 1942 Gen. of mountain troops Ferdinand Schörner issued a special order commenting on the 'eternally immortal base area' on the Arctic Ocean front: 'Too many soldiers in our base areas lack the experience of combat, they end up too far removed from matters of life and death. If, on top of that, there is a lazy or incompetent officer around, then the sense of one's calling as a warrior, the sense that a front-line soldier has, gets lost.' Because the war was getting harder, because total war still lay ahead, every officer must be fired by the National Socialist idea. 'He can—I repeat—can be nothing else but a fanatic of this militant ideal and of steely fulfilment of one's duty.'<sup>37</sup>

The Third Panzer Army had likewise discovered the need for 'arming the soldier better against the harshness and duration of the war'. However, it did not so much support swift and effective 'action', as Schörner did, but instead recommended systematic 'military-ideological guidance' through divisional welfare officers. These were further trained on two courses, run on 16/17 October and 19/20 November 1942. The introduction of these DBOs, the Third Panzer Army noted in its second report on the experience gained, had at first met with 'criticism, but very soon with strong approval wherever the task had been tackled properly'. Commanding officers and unit leaders had seen their educational leadership duties diminished, and both older and younger officers had been reminded of the 'patriotic instruction' of 1917/18 and of the Soviet institution of the commissar/*politruk*.

None of all this was what the Third Panzer Army, Army Group Centre, or the OKH wanted. To them the object of military-ideological guidance lay in a strengthening of the will to fight, in a confident assessment of the situation even in the face of reverses and a longer duration of the war, and in making the troops realize that the war had a historic significance for National Socialist Germany. 'Troop welfare is meant to relax, military-ideological guidance to rally and lead. It is the higher form of spiritual influence.'<sup>38</sup> This also included guidance 'in the struggle against enemy propaganda'.<sup>39</sup> After

<sup>36</sup> WB Ostland, Ic/Wg.F. of 16 Dec. 1942, sgd. Vodepp, BA-MA RH 19 III/490.

<sup>37</sup> Copy, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. On the divisive use of 'Etappe' see Kroener, "Frontochsen" und "Etappenbullen", 371–84.

<sup>38</sup> Report covering the period September to December. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/490. In mid-January 1943 it was sent on by OKH/Gen zbV/HWesAbt to the command authorities of the army 'as a suggestion'. Fourth Army had also introduced its DBOs to their tasks on 18/19 Oct. 1942, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. Other armies, such as the Sixteenth Army and Norway Army, followed suit only in Jan. or Feb. 1943.

<sup>39</sup> This was the title of a brochure by Lt.-Col. Dr Hans Ellenbeck, issued by OKW/WPr in January 1943, BA-MA RW 5/88.

the end of October 1942 on courses in Berlin the army's senior personnel officers were similarly brought ideologically into line, meaning 'acquainted with the dynamic forces of our time'. The new career path of senior adjutants (from division upward) was, in fact, open only to officers who were thoroughly imbued with the National Socialist creed and filled with a strong faith in Führer and *Volk*.<sup>40</sup>

From the newly appointed chief of the army personnel office, Maj.-Gen. Rudolf Schmundt, chief Wehrmacht adjutant to Hitler, the participants of the first course learnt that the officer had to be both 'political' and 'popular'. The oath sworn to the Führer had not been to the latter's person, but to him as the 'personification of the nation'. It was also important to 'recognize the enemies [of the Reich] . . . the Jews . . .', who were acting everywhere as 'fermenters of decomposition'. From the officers was demanded an 'unambiguous, totally uncompromising attitude' to the 'Jewish question'; this was defined as a 'part of the officer's National Socialist attitude that was decisive for the outcome of the war'. From this followed, according to Schmundt, a correct attitude towards the 'executions, that need not necessarily be carried out by the Wehrmacht'. The most dangerous of all was the so-called 'decent Jew'.<sup>41</sup>

During the same course the NSDAP's liaison man with the Wehrmacht, *Ministerialdirigent* Passe, expressed the opinion that the war now was an ideological racial struggle, for which the soldier had to be 'further schooled, further educated and guided' along the Party's line. Since the Party 'held no sway within the Wehrmacht, these initiatives would have to come from the Wehrmacht itself'.<sup>42</sup>

The army's intensified putting into effect of the far from new realization that the 'struggle of minds' demanded just as basic a view of the war as did the 'struggle of weaponry' naturally enough attracted the attention of the SS. SS-Gruppenführer Gottlob Berger, responsible for ideological education and political schooling as head of the SS Central Office (*SS-Hauptamt*) ordered the commanders of units in the field—via the SS Operational Department (*SS-Führungsamt*)—that placing the relevant Dept. VI under the control of 'the service authorities of the army ("Military-ideological education") [was] out of the question'.<sup>43</sup> Berger also rejected, 'because of our fundamental views', the concept and contents of 'military-ideological education'. It was 'not National

<sup>40</sup> See the basic instruction of 6 Nov. 1942, BA-MA H 6/902; Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 330–1.

<sup>41</sup> See lecture of 17 Nov. 1942, BA-MA RH 12–1/75; Schmundt, activity report, 16 (31 Oct. 1942); order of 31 Oct. 1942, BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 709; OKM/MPA of Oct. 1944, regarding instruction, NA, OKM-Miscellaneous Material, PG 95612. After January 1943 the item 'National Socialist attitude' appears in the annual officer assessment. Unlike the army, the Luftwaffe had regarded 'the attitude of its officers to state, Party, and ideology' as worth recording since 1939; see the general observations on the Luftwaffe in this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Lecture on 'Wehrmacht and Party' on 26 Nov. 1942, quoted from Berghahn, *NSDAP*, 40 n. 104.

<sup>43</sup> Order No. 415/42 of 20 Oct. 1942, BA NS 19/3813; Wegner, *Waffen-SS*, 215. In mid-April 1943 Berger judged that the SS schooling was better than that of the OKW, BA NS 19/3871.

Socialist, but liberalist'. Such an ideologically neutral attitude would crack 'in the face of the fanaticized Bolshevik'. 'He and his subhumanity can be defeated only by means of a better [totalitarian] ideology that has pervaded and fanaticized its followers just as much, down to the last fibre of their being'. Yet not even the SS had as yet got to that point, as is shown by the criticism of the Ic of the SS Death's Head Division of 10 February 1941 and Himmler's order of 24 February 1943.<sup>44</sup>

It seems necessary to cast a glance also at the navy and Luftwaffe. Naturally, 'people management' in the navy did not proceed independently of the basic political and military conditions in the Third Reich, as had been the case under the Weimar republic. The supposed 'ideology-free space' of the navy was restricted not only from without, that is to say by the orders from the Reichswehr ministry (later the war ministry) mentioned earlier,<sup>45</sup> but there was also an inner adjustment to the 'movement' and a 'joyous acceptance of the basic ideological positions of National Socialism'. Education in the navy, which was marked even more than in the army by the trauma of the collapse of 1918, had been aiming at an 'inward attitude' as early as between 1920 and 1932; this had 'by itself' resulted 'in a truly National Socialist attitude'.<sup>46</sup>

By that Grand Adm. Raeder understood unity, discipline, obedience—in fact, a 'universally shared martial spirit', which, along with good military accomplishments, was the basis of the navy's striking power.<sup>47</sup> This goal was to be aimed at by a strict education, since any repetition of the 'intellectual and emotional collapse' was to be avoided. At the same time the navy commander-in-chief was well aware that the much-invoked 'naval spirit' was a fiction, as the navy had, between 1933 and 1939, quintupled its numbers (from 1,100 to 4,992 officers, and from 13,900 to 73,943 petty officers and ratings).<sup>48</sup>

The navy had entered the war with the educational methods tested in peacetime. Its ideal of 'man management', according to Salewski, was 'a balanced "healthy" relationship between a benign, fair, if necessary also severe but always authoritarian superior and a decent, efficient, obedient, but less than mature subordinate'.<sup>49</sup> The most important means of 'man management', in war and in peace, was unconditional obedience, cheerfully given. The 'bible' for education in the navy was the book by Lt.-Commander Siegfried Sorge, *Der Marineoffizier als Führer und Erzieher* [The Naval Officer as Leader and Educator], first published in February 1937.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> BA NS 34/15 or BA NS 19/281; Förster, 'Weltanschauliche Erziehung', 106.

<sup>45</sup> Thus the navy developed a new guideline for teaching at the naval college in Mürwik; this implemented Blomberg's order on uniform political education of the officer corps of 30 Jan. 1936.

<sup>46</sup> Raeder on 30 Jan. 1943. Quoted from Salewski, *Von Raeder zu Dönitz*, 144; see Schreiber, *Deutsche Kriegsverbrechen in Italien*, 29–30.

<sup>47</sup> See Raeder, 'Mein Verhältnis zu Adolf Hitler und der Partei', BA-MA RM 6/104, fo. 16, 18.

<sup>48</sup> See *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648 bis 1939*, VII, 439, 443; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 1122.

<sup>49</sup> Salewski, 'Menschenführung', 88.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 83–4; Sorge, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, 21, and Ch. II of this section.

As part of the preparations for the war a 'service welfare' department was set up in February 1939 in the navy high command (OKM), more precisely in the department for 'principles and organization of military education and training' in the *Marinewehramt*. The guidelines developed by it were authorized at the beginning of May 1939 by the commanding admirals and commander-in-chief.<sup>51</sup> The tactical and mental preparedness for action was of course the responsibility of the unit commanders. They were to shape their subordinates so that they transformed the German navy's inferiority in numbers to the 'arch-enemy England' into a superiority in quality.<sup>52</sup> Thus Capt. Friedrich Ruge, head of minesweepers in the western command, motivated the 'inner spirit' of the units and military welfare in Cuxhaven in the winter of 1939/40 with the motto "“Never again Ringelnatz”"—and that, thanks to the useful hints from that gentleman, has succeeded quite well."<sup>53</sup>

A year later, when how long the war against Britain would last could no longer be gauged, the creation of military welfare officers [*Wehrbetreuungs-offiziere*] was decided in the headquarters; these would be 'co-responsible' with the relevant commanders at all levels, 'for the military-ideological state of the forces'.<sup>54</sup> The concept 'military welfare' combined, for the navy, the tasks of 'ideological guidance' and 'leisure planning', i.e. all measures that, outside the strictly service sphere, 'contribute to giving the serviceman the necessary basis for his intellectual and psychological frame of mind, and that help him shape his free time purposefully'.

As there was no service regulation for the men's leisure, every unit commander should 'steer this purposefully to ensure that the cultural life of the German people, systematically destroyed over the past few decades by mistaken social developments and by *Jewish undermining*, could arise anew'.<sup>55</sup> Six months later the navy had to admit that military welfare work had not yet 'everywhere resoundingly fulfilled its aim of affecting the inner attitude of the servicemen'. Commanding officers were therefore asked to ensure, by means of lectures, the appropriate instruction and further education of all officers serving with the troops.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648 bis 1939*, VII, 496–7.

<sup>52</sup> Raeder's address in Mürwik on 18 Feb. 1940, Lohmann, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Marine-Ausbildung*, 138.

<sup>53</sup> Ruge in his lecture at the meeting 6–8 Nov. 1941, repr. in Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung bei der Kriegsmarine*, i/2, ann. 8. On Frühling see Planitz, *Wehrbetreuung*. After the war Ruge claimed that these sentences were not his. See Salewski, 'Menschenführung'. The reference is to a book by Ringelnatz, *Als Mariner im Weltkrieg* (Ringelnatz was a satirical cabaret comedian/author of the 1920s and early 1930s, who had served on a minesweeper in the First World War and in his act made fun of the navy. He was banned by the Nazis as 'decadent'). Andre Pecht, MA, Kiel, is preparing a biography of Ruge.

<sup>54</sup> Order of OKM/AMA/MWehr IIf of 8 June 1940 and 31 Jan. 1941, BA-MA RM 45 IV/865; Military Welfare leaflet 11 of 1 Apr. 1941, 2, BA-MA TS/258/3008; see also the list of booklets to be used for military welfare, 1 May 1941, *ibid*.

<sup>55</sup> BA-MA RM 45 IV/865, 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>56</sup> Order by Warzecha of 20 Jan. 1941, BA-MA RM 45 IV/867.

At the beginning of December 1940 the navy summoned its 'military welfare officers' to Berlin for the first time.<sup>57</sup> Those attending the meeting included a whole string of commanders and unit heads. The ideological education and spiritual care of the servicemen, the latter in particular, were defined by Rear-Adm. Walter Warzecha, the chief of the General Navy Office, as a 'leadership task of the first order, one for which we need the best and most capable officers'.<sup>58</sup> In order to master the 'enormous future tasks' of the German people during and after the war, the responsible section head, Lt.-Commander Erich Frühling, pointed out in his lecture, it was important to 'make as many servicemen as possible into conscious and enthusiastic exponents of the [National Socialist] ideology and into fanatics for its realization'. The aim of morale welfare was the creation of 'people with a conviction of their own, who are, to the very end, keen executors of our nation's tasks even if, without witnesses and without leaders, they stand alone at a doomed post'.<sup>59</sup> The ultimate goal of military welfare was described by Frühling as a new 'soldierly culture'. The immediate goal was the concentration of all will-power on achieving victory in this war. 'And not only victory with weapons, but in the broadest sense. This includes the achievement of respect in the occupied territory, and assertion in the ethnic struggle.'<sup>60</sup>

The navy's basic instruction on the 'military-ideological guidance of the troops' was issued on 20 January 1941.<sup>61</sup> In view of the insufficient filling of officers' posts, in terms of both quality and quantity, Raeder attached importance to a 'systematic guidance and education of the younger officer corps for correct leadership, treatment, and caring for the men'. There must never again be a failure of men management as there had been in the First World War. At the same time, every single officer should 'time and again be instructed in the higher aims of our struggle for freedom, so as to strengthen his sense of greater insight compared to his men'. All officers had a sacred duty to cultivate with all their might the assets entrusted to them, and to wrestle every day for the soul of every single serviceman', and to do this by *personal* influence. The object of this 'military-ideological guidance' by the commanding officers was to hand on the 'vital igniting spark that is passed down, by means of fortnightly commanding officers' conferences, from those at the top to the officers under them and then through them to every single serviceman, thus forging a single, united will that will drive through the solution to the tasks that, given the men and means available, seem almost impossible to fulfil'. Raeder held unwaveringly to the belief that Hitler's war aim

<sup>57</sup> See convening notice and provisional agenda, 13 Nov. 1940, BA-MA RM 45 IV/863.

<sup>58</sup> BA-MA RM 45 IV/865; see Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann. 1. Maj. Stauffenberg also believed that fighting in a seemingly hopeless situation was the mark of the real soldier, since otherwise he was a defeatist, repr. in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 237 (not in English).

<sup>60</sup> Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann. 2; id., *Führung und Soldatenseele*.

<sup>61</sup> ObdM/AMA/MWehr II f, BA-MA RM 45 IV/867. There are also the implementing regulations issued by Warzecha on 24 Jan. 1941.



required the 'supreme effort' of the navy 'everywhere'.<sup>62</sup> The implementation of the order of 20 January 1941, and the level of ideological and spiritual care achieved among the troops, are particularly evident in the area of the Commanding Admiral, France.<sup>63</sup>

The navy's inspector of education similarly realized, from the lessons of the First World War, that the longer a war lasted, the more important morale support for the servicemen became. 'In 1918 the Wehrmacht [*sic*] failed not because military orders were badly given, but because those leading the nation no longer held the souls of their men in their hand—and doing that is a lot more difficult, and calls for a lot more of showing an example and of being oneself a thoroughly decent fellow . . . And the longer this war goes on, the more this will come to the fore.'<sup>64</sup> For this reason the navy felt it necessary to outline the tasks of ideological and spiritual guidance for the third winter of the war.

This was done at the beginning of November 1941 at a conference of commanding officers in Berlin, because it was upon these officers, 'solely and alone', that the responsibility for the servicemen's attitude in difficult situations rested. The military welfare officer was merely their assistant in the 'leader's task' of 'military-ideological guidance'. To raise the 'value' of the men by 'correct military-ideological guidance' and simultaneously to educate their superior officers towards 'high leadership qualities'—that, Vice-Adm. Warzecha declared, was 'the only way' to make up for the shortcomings, in both quality and numbers, of personnel replacement that existed at all levels.

As for education in how to lead, both militarily and politically, Germany 'in the present war' was better off, Ruge (now a commodore and Commander Security West) added, 'because in National Socialism we have a very powerful concept, one that will carry the whole Wehrmacht and the entire *Volk*'.<sup>65</sup> These words of Ruge were merely a variation on the navy's official view: Hitler, according to Raeder on 20 January 1941, had after the collapse of 1918 'through his personality and the power of his vision saved the German nation from being rent apart, and rescued a large part of the people from Communism'. The nation unified by him, 'where it carried arms', was now being 'entrusted fully and solely to the officer corps'. That was why 'daily influence by the leadership upon the individual officer and man' was necessary. A few weeks earlier the commandant of an outpost patrol boat had defined a well-led front boat as a 'National Socialist model enterprise', and insisted that 'to be an officer means, and must always mean, being also an exemplary National Socialist'.<sup>66</sup>

The commander-in-chief of the navy, in his closing remarks at the Berlin conference on 8 November 1941, confined himself to reminding the assembled officers of their duty to be role models for their men. 'Have faith in your men, and shape them the way the Führer needs them in order to solve the

<sup>62</sup> Order of 23 May 1940, repr. in Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, i, 522 ff.

<sup>63</sup> BA-MA RM 45 IV/865-7.

<sup>64</sup> Address by Adm. Wilhelm Marschall, 8 Sept. 1941, repr. in *Marineschule Mürwik*, 299-303.

<sup>65</sup> BA-MA M/1475/E; Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann 4,8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, ann. 9: Lt. Rudolf Krohne, 'Der Kommandant auf kleinen Fahrzeugen', 22, 56.



hard but massive tasks of this war and of the future.' Raeder characterized the ideal 'German man' as 'a fighter with his spirit and his weapons, hard, frugal, carefully trained, with a conviction of his own, and a strong will', one who would work and fight for Germany to 'the last breath'.<sup>67</sup>

In January 1942 a further conference was held in Berlin for commanding officers who were to run officers' courses on 'spiritual guidance of the troops' in their front-line sectors.<sup>68</sup> A training course for unit commanders was also held in the area of the North Sea Naval Base. Commander Otto Lensch, the third admiralty staff officer, in his lecture on 'discipline' especially emphasized the link between discipline and ideology, a subject previously touched on by Adm. Warzecha. In March 1942 Lensch expressed his joy at the creation of the 'Greater German Reich' and the death of the 'miserable in-between Reich' (i.e. the Weimar Republic). Although genuine Prussiandom had provided the basis for the National Socialist state, 'the real roots of National Socialism are in the trenches of the First World War—in other words, retired front-line soldiers created its alloy and the front-line soldier took it for his coin and minted it.' From this realization, Lensch continued, followed the soldier's avowal of National Socialism and his duty to stake his life for its preservation and nature. 'If we succeed in making these ideas the spiritual property of the serviceman, and in showing him that in this respect there are in his unit only men with the same ideas, then the essential precondition for good discipline in the mental sphere is fulfilled.'<sup>69</sup>

The manifold efforts made by the navy in the field of military morale support—ideological and spiritual guidance and organizing leisure activities—in order to maintain the combat morale of the men emerge also from the activity report of the commander North Sea Security (*Befehlshaber der Sicherung der Nordsee*, BSN). After courses on ideological guidance for senior staff had failed to meet the 'substantially different needs of seafaring unit commanders', a special course was held at The Hague in October 1942 with what was described as 'particular success'. An identical course was held at the beginning of February 1943. It is noteworthy that one officer, as his commander recorded with satisfaction, completely changed in how he treated his men. During the six winter months of 1942/3 more than one-third of all officers passed through these two courses in the area of BSN.<sup>70</sup>

In February 1942, in an address to a conference of naval judges in Berlin, Vice-Adm. Warzecha once more explained the navy's fundamental views on man management in the third year of the war. The war, he said, had now become a global one, and its duration impossible to forecast. As a result of the enemies' 'fanatical determination to annihilate' it had become a life-and-death struggle. No quarter was to be given. 'The entire nation has either consciously or instinctively understood this change in the war.' The end of

<sup>67</sup> BA-MA M/1475/E; Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, app. 5.

<sup>68</sup> PA Berlin, R 29692.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted from Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 345.

<sup>70</sup> Review of the war year 1942, 19 Feb. 1943, BA-MA RM 7/97.

the First World War had shown that as the harshness and duration of the war increased, so the task of man management became both more difficult and also more decisive for overall success. The German Wehrmacht, he said, had not forgotten that experience, and in this war was therefore carefully and deliberately applying every tested means of leadership, while attempting to develop and apply new ones, such as ideological guidance. The inner attitude of the individual serviceman was being shaped and secured by 'instruction and example, by habit and drill, by distinction and praise along with reprimand and punishment'.

Warzecha defined the military court system as the final and extreme section of military education, when all other measures had failed. The judges were not just some 'institution for administering justice that had strayed into the Wehrmacht through organizational accident, [but] organs of military man management'.<sup>71</sup> Already at their naval college the young officer candidates were emphatically told that where character was concerned there could be no consideration or leniency shown; superiors and comrades were instead in duty bound to act with merciless harshness against 'parasites and weaklings'. In the interest of the great cause, that was to say the total war against the 'Anglo-Saxons powerful at sea, and above all against the implacable, fanatical, and brutal opponent in the east', as well as in the interest of the community, a man could not be 'shaped into a sailor' without the 'inward solidarity' among those dressed in blue, and the 'unshakeable certainty that [Hitler] will lead us to victory'.<sup>72</sup> Yet contrary to expectation, the navy's new intake was marked by an 'increase of the following weaknesses and shortcomings: decline of a sense of authority, unmilitary behaviour, lack of seriousness and sense of responsibility, lack of truthfulness, absent-mindedness, lack of thoroughness, inclination to resort to alcohol and nicotine, increase in thefts from comrades, lack of respect'.<sup>73</sup> A destroyer captain could find an explanation for many of these 'weaknesses' in a 'gradual change in the concept of the nature of Germanness'. The Commander Baltic Security could only bear out these 'sad experiences': 'When it comes down to it, what the young people as they're educated today lack is "a good thrashing" . . . I hope that such facilities in the hands of *mature* educators and superiors will provide a counterweight to the "self-adulation" of today's youth, which is bound ultimately to lead to indiscipline and the rejection of all authority, and thus to falsifying our nationalist ideals into Marxist-anarchist ones.'<sup>74</sup> At the commanding officers' conference in mid-January 1943 Adm. Warzecha spoke of the tasks of 'ideological, spiritual and human guidance' of the men that were critical for

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., example of Otto Kranzbühler. Attention was also drawn to the inner connection between National Socialist education and disciplinary measures for maintaining the troops' striking power in the later *Handbuch für höhere Adjutanten [des Heeres]*, Berlin, 1944, 157, BA-MA RHD 23/9. On military jurisdiction in the navy see Walmrath, *Iustitia et disciplina*.

<sup>72</sup> Address by Vice-Adm. Lohmann at the oath-taking on 17 June 1942, in Lohmann, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Marine-Ausbildung*, 135 ff.; see Ch. III of this section.

<sup>73</sup> Marinegruppenkdo West, A II, No. 5609/41, 10 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RM 61 I/77.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

the winning of the war. His subject was 'ideological guidance of the troops in the fourth winter of the war'. Both he and his listeners realized that, in spite of the unit commanders' courses that had been prescribed, many officers were still not up to the task of leading their men in the mental and spiritual sphere as well. They were either too young, too inexperienced, lacked the necessary knowledge, or did not have the skill needed for imparting to their men the firm will to defy all difficulties. Among the armoury on this 'spiritual front', which was every bit as important as the military one, the chief of the General Navy Central Office listed: being rooted in the ideology of the Führer, acquaintance with the basic lines and objectives of policy, knowledge of the overall military situation and especially of the war at sea, awareness of the food supply situation, and an understanding of questions of economic policy.<sup>75</sup> Unlike the army, the navy was not linking the administration of 'spiritual guidance' with particular service posts, such as that of Ic or A II. Warzecha reminded the commanders that 'the best admiralty staff officer—provided he can somehow be made available—[was] only just good enough'.

On 12 January 1943, the first day of the conference, Lt. Professor Falk Ruttko placed 'spiritual guidance' in the German tradition of man management. He likened it in particular to the efforts of the First World War Supreme Army Command to boost the army's spiritual and mental combat capacity by means of 'patriotic instruction'. Although this had been a worthy aim, it had not been successful. Now, however, under their 'Führer of genius' Hitler, there was a great opportunity for subjecting 'all men capable of bearing arms to a total education based on a correct ideology'. The task was to create the new type of 'soldierly fighter' who would have the necessary spiritual and mental stamina for total war.

Needless to say, the officer corps would have to be the exponent of total education. In view of the shortcomings there still were in the handling of the new leadership tool of 'spiritual guidance', Ruttko appealed to the naval officer corps to understand the needs of the times, to 'be aware of their responsibility for Germany's future, and to undergo training in being a total leader'.<sup>76</sup> In view of an officer corps (numbering 22,094 in 1942) that was 'very uneven as to background and education', Grand Adm. Raeder, in his closing remarks at the commanders' conference, pointed out on 15 January 1943 that the vigorous ideological uniformity needed in the officer corps could stem only from National Socialism.<sup>77</sup>

On 31 January 1943, after nearly fifteen years in office, Raeder left the high command of the navy, to be succeeded by Grand Adm. Karl Dönitz. The system of 'spiritual guidance' within the navy was changed not only by the

<sup>75</sup> Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann. 6.

<sup>76</sup> BA R 22/2281; see Förster, 'Ludendorff and Hitler'. Falk Ruttko, born 1894 and a naval officer even before the First World War, was certainly an 'old-time Loot' (naval lieutenant), but the witnesses' statements quoted by Zoepf are incorrect; Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 77 n. 1. Dr. jur. Ruttko was moreover a well-known race law expert of the Third Reich.

<sup>77</sup> Frühling, *Wehrbetreuung*, i/2, ann. 7.

psychological turning point in the war that is linked with the word 'Stalingrad', but also by the personality of the new commander-in-chief.<sup>78</sup> Upon assuming office Dönitz made it clear that he intended to lead with 'ruthless determination' in order first of all 'to win this war', and do so with 'most fanatical dedication and steeliest will to victory',<sup>79</sup> and, secondly, to make it clear to the public that the navy was 'a National Socialist force' and not some 'withered imperial one'.<sup>80</sup>

The Luftwaffe, of course, was unable to look back on such long traditions as the army and navy. It was a real child of the Third Reich: 'only National Socialism' had created the Luftwaffe as the third Wehrmacht service.<sup>81</sup> Its spectacularly rapid development, both technical and in personnel, between 1933 and 1945 was reminiscent of German naval construction from 1897 to 1914—though 'in both cases fascination with new possibilities opened up by a new weapon combined with a nationalistic claim to great-power status to produce an awareness of power',<sup>82</sup> strikingly reflected in the person of Hermann Göring. He was not only Reich minister for aviation and commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, but also, after Hitler, the most important person in the National Socialist movement. The Luftwaffe, needless to say, was guided in the training of its men by the orders issued by Blomberg for the Wehrmacht. The combination of Prussian-German soldierly spirit and National Socialist ideology was to help produce 'real men' out of those who in 1935 had volunteered to become 'leaders and educators for fighting fitness'—in other words, officers. Unreserved affirmation of the National Socialist state was a self-evident prerequisite.<sup>83</sup>

Göring insisted upon personally impressing on the first 913 Luftwaffe senior ensigns (who had, of course, come by a roundabout route via the army or navy), when they took their oath on 20 May 1936, what being an officer meant: 'Just as I demand of you that you should be soldiers'—i.e. obedient, with heroic courage, readiness for sacrifice, and comradeship—'so I also demand of you that you belong with all your heart to the ideology that alone enables you today to be soldiers, officers, and especially Luftwaffe officers'. Göring demanded that every Luftwaffe man 'concern himself with ideological issues, for ultimately ideology is the compass needle of his life, by which he has to act'. Anyone unable to be a National Socialist should take off 'Adolf Hitler's tunic'.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> See Mulligan, *Neither Sharks nor Wolves*, 227 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Order of 5 Feb. 1943, repr. in Salewski, *Von Raeder zu Dönitz*, 145–6.

<sup>80</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vii, 20 Feb. 1943.

<sup>81</sup> See the speech by Maj.-Gen. Walther Wevers at the opening of the Air War and Flying Technology Academy in Berlin-Gatow on 1 Nov. 1935, repr. in Boog, *Die deutsche Luftwaffenführung*, 631–5, here 632.

<sup>82</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 481.

<sup>83</sup> See the instruction leaflet for the Luftwaffe officer intake of August 1935, repr. in Völker, *Dokumente*, 310 ff.; 'Vorläufige Richtlinien für die Grundausbildung der Offizieranwärter der Fliegertruppe 1936', repr. in Schmidt, *Luftwaffen-Offizierausbildung*, 119; Boog, *Das Offizierkorps der Luftwaffe*, 275–6; Corum, *The Luftwaffe and the Coalition Air War*, 145 ff.

<sup>84</sup> *Schulungshefte*, 1 (1939), 1; see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 145.

In consequence, the directives for Luftwaffe training and guidelines for educational work were changed in 1937. On the grounds that National Socialist Germany wished to educate 'a new leader class aligned with the shared and binding ethnic ideology', 'patriotic and ideological education' was made the basis of military training. This, in turn, was entirely geared towards 'training that creates a bold aggressive spirit and continuous readiness for action'. As the Luftwaffe officer had to 'set an example of a National Socialist concept of the state and way of living', 'crucial importance was attached . . .' to the schooling of officer candidates and the further education of officers 'in all questions of the National Socialist ideology'.<sup>85</sup>

On 2 June 1937 Gen. Erhard Milch, undersecretary of state for aviation, was charged with ensuring the 'uniform ideological schooling of the troops'.<sup>86</sup> On 'matters of ideological schooling' he was entitled to issue direct instructions to the inspector of Luftwaffe education and training, who was, at the same time, commander of air war colleges.<sup>87</sup> The latter requested the Reich war ministry to let him have the fundamental lectures of the first national-political course on 27 January 1937, so he could work out guidelines for teaching at the air war colleges.<sup>88</sup>

In the spring of 1939 a military welfare group was set up within Dept. V of the Luftwaffe operations staff. Its task, from the beginning of the war, was 'the maintenance of the will to victory and of a soldierly spirit among the troops'. There was no clear dividing line between its two main areas of activity—maintenance of combat capability and leisure activities. At the command authorities level troop welfare was handled by the Ic department. The 'appointed exponent' of morale support among the troops was, of course, the unit commander, who was responsible for the 'mental attitude' of his men.<sup>89</sup> He was also in charge of political instruction.

Gen. Hugo Sperrle, chief of Air Fleet 3, was one of those for whom this was not an area for theoretical discussions. He wanted 'the following [simple] arguments to be put over' during instruction: 'Feeding our people is difficult without enough space. If we use our foreign currency to buy raw materials for producing guns and aircraft, because other powers force us to do so, then savings have to be made in the provision of foodstuffs and luxuries. The present generation has to bear this with gritted teeth so that the next generation can carry on the work, and so that the great German *Volk* never ceases to exist. [The serviceman] will gladly do without something if he knows that he is helping the Führer accomplish his great task.'<sup>90</sup>

<sup>85</sup> See L.Div. 7, issue 1937, pts. 1 and 6, as well as 'Lehr- und Prüfungsordnung für die Luftkriegsschulen' (3rd course), BA-MA RL 4 I/8; see Schmidt, *Luftwaffen-Offizierausbildung*.

<sup>86</sup> Boog, *Die deutsche Luftwaffenführung 1935–1945*, 221.

<sup>87</sup> Völker, *Dokumente*, 143.

<sup>88</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 74.

<sup>89</sup> See the lecture by *Amtsrat* Schmeißer at the Berlin conference of military welfare officers in Berlin, 18–20 Apr. 1940, BA-MA RL 7/283.

<sup>90</sup> LfL.Kdo. 3, Adj. (IIa) of 24 July 1939, BA-MA RL 7/313. Sperrle had stressed the importance of political instruction as early as 31 Oct. 1938, BA-MA RL 7/312.

The objective of military education in the Luftwaffe was to anchor the Third Reich's war aims in the minds of the troops in such a way that it was 'intellectually approved and wholeheartedly endorsed'. Since the methods of patriotic instruction in the final phase of the First World War, as well as those of the 'people's university', were regarded as having failed, the officer in Dept. V dealing with the subject, reserve Lt. Hans Ellwein, wished to introduce a system of informal discussion groups. There, in frank and free conversation, inhibitions were to be relaxed, confidence restored, and firm convictions created, which in turn would strengthen 'the duty of spiritual resilience'.<sup>91</sup>

At first, however, Ellwein was busy preparing the first volume of *Handbuch der Wehrbetreuung* [Manual of Military Welfare]. The first copies appeared on 10 December 1939. Three months later Max Simoneit's *Gedanken über Soldatenerziehung* [Thoughts on Soldiers' Education] were distributed among the troops. He placed 'giving the example, with past lives and past deaths, above all [other] educational principles' in servicemen's education. The educator's self-education, in turn, came before the tasks of educating the men to 'obedience, self-denial, combat'. Only this trinity of achievement lent the German soldier's life in the service of the nation 'that [special] heroic-tragic character'.<sup>92</sup> On this point Simoneit was fully in agreement with the Luftwaffe leadership, which had defined the objective of training precisely as sweeping the servicemen along to a supreme effort of their emotional, intellectual, and physical strength and consolidating their discipline, obedience, comradeship, and readiness for sacrifice.<sup>93</sup>

Within the sphere of ideological and spiritual care there was of course scope for individual initiatives. Thus Lt.-Col. Reinhard Graubner in November 1940 produced a manual for Air Gau XI (Hamburg), which the commanding officer passed on to all officers, officials, and members of the corps of engineers for 'thorough study'.<sup>94</sup> Air Gau VI command (Münster) on the other hand supported 'front-line war artists'. These were to create 'pictures of the war', topical yet timeless, in such a way that they reflected the 'massive fighting community of the nation' as well as the 'heroic attitude of the age'.<sup>95</sup> Yet another road was chosen by the Ic of Air Gau XII command (Wiesbaden), Col. Werner Voigt-Ruscheweyh.<sup>96</sup> In his opinion the welfare material issued

<sup>91</sup> Copy of letter (ObdL/GenSt/5. Abt., IX [Wehrbetreuung]), No. 5591 of 9 Nov. 1939 to Prof. Karl Troll of the Geographical Institute of Bonn university, BA-MA RH 1/v. 58.

<sup>92</sup> BA-MA RH 12-1/v. 121. Ministerialrat Dr Simoneit, army psychologist since 1927, was during 1940/1 in charge not only of the OKH's Inspectorate of Aptitude Tests, but also of the working party on military psychology of the German Society for Military Policy and Military Science, BA-MA RW 19/1499, Report No. 31. See *Deutsche Wehrmachtpsychologie*, 76 ff.

<sup>93</sup> 'Richtlinien für die Ausbildung im Kriege' of 21 Feb. 1940, BA-MA RL 7/698.

<sup>94</sup> BA-MA RL 19/497.

<sup>95</sup> Seiler, *Das Bild des Krieges*, 3ff.; id., *Flak an Rhein und Ruhr*; Schmidt, *Maler an der Front*, 639ff.

<sup>96</sup> Voigt-Ruscheweyh, born 1880, a Party member from 1 May 1933, was during his time as military adviser in China (until 30 June 1938) also head of education of the NSDAP branch in Nanking (BA-MA Pers 6/2012).



by the Wehrmacht high command failed to meet the demands 'one had to make on ideological education and spiritual care'.<sup>97</sup> He wanted to turn military-ideological welfare into a form of military education and raise it to become 'military-ideological guidance' of the troops. 'The most profound meaning of military-ideological guidance and uniform political leadership is in the strengthening of military resolve. It is the most noble task of the unit commander to lead his men politically in such a manner that an insight into historical necessity is awakened in them, and that the determination grows within them to say a convinced "Yes!" to this historical necessity.'<sup>98</sup>

Voigt-Ruscheweyh was able to test his concept of 'military-spiritual guidance' soon after assuming an active-service post in occupied France. As Ic of Air Gau command Western France he was responsible for *Beiträge [für den Einheitsführer] zur wehrgeistigen Führung der Truppe* [Contributions (for the unit leader) on the Military-Ideological Leadership of the Troops], published at weekly intervals in the summer and autumn of 1940.<sup>99</sup> Although he avoided crass ideological indoctrination, he allowed National Socialist ideas to flow into his historical articles and military-political situation reports. In autumn 1941 he was transferred to the east. While Voigt-Ruscheweyh's suggestions on 'military-ideological guidance' of the troops met with approval beyond his own sphere of activity, they did not become trend-setters in the Luftwaffe as quickly as Messerschmidt assumes.<sup>100</sup> For the time being the Luftwaffe leadership kept to its own concept of military welfare, giving 'military-ideological guidance' no precedence over 'leisure activities'.<sup>101</sup>

Not until the Berlin conference of military welfare officers in October 1942 did Lt.-Col. Brosius, the relevant group head in the Luftwaffe operations staff, express the opinion that military welfare was 'predominantly military-ideological guidance'. The military welfare officer must not be a 'director of entertainment', nor a distributor of welfare material. His main task should be maintaining and strengthening the men's 'mental and willpower resilience'. They should not only get used to the idea of a long war, but also cope with the fanaticism and cruelty of the war, and with the stress from the air war back at home. The crucial thing was the inner attitude of the serviceman of whatever rank: 'whether he sinks to his knees faced with the magnitude of what has still to be accomplished, or instead stands upright with a natural confidence in victory and with faith in the leadership.' Only an officer who adopts this self-evident attitude, who does not make use of 'superficial

<sup>97</sup> 18 Feb. 1940, quoted from Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 265. On the practice of ideological welfare in the military districts IX (Kassel), XII (Wiesbaden), XIII (Nuremberg), and XVII (Vienna) see Stang, *Meinungsmanipulierung*; BA-MA RH 53-9/66, RH 53-12/68, RH 21-2/v. 60.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted from Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 269.

<sup>99</sup> BA-MA RLD 24/32. In December 1940 the title was changed to *Beiträge für den Einheitsführer*. Instead an irregular appendix 'Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft. Lehrstoff für die Arbeitsgemeinschaften zur allgemeinen wehrgeistigen Schulung' was published.

<sup>100</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 264.

<sup>101</sup> 'Directions for the military welfare officer' of September 1942, BA-MA RL 2 II/738.



optimism and shallow phrases', but confronts his men with the 'sober truth, combined with a will to victory and confidence in victory, will bring his men to the same attitude'.<sup>102</sup>

Col. Voigt-Ruscheweyh, by then Ic in the Air Gau command Rostov, continued to preach the same line. His *Wochenberichte für den Einheitsführer* [Weekly Reports for the Unit Leader] not only met with approval and publicity at Fourth Army command,<sup>103</sup> but were also assessed as 'excellent' by the Wehrmacht high command. The head of the *Inland* department, Col. von Beguelin, commended the topicality of these publications—something the OKW was unable to ensure for its own *Mitteilungen* because of the necessary co-signatories being spread over various departments.<sup>104</sup> Subordinate Luftwaffe authorities likewise judged the *Wochenberichte* to be a 'useful support' in their military-ideological guidance of the troops. They tried to make the individual serviceman understand the meaning of the struggle, and conveyed to him the feeling 'that his personal effort [was] absolutely necessary'. In this way they strengthened his readiness for the fight, and frustrated 'the intentions of hostile undermining propaganda' designed to make the German soldier dejected and war-weary.<sup>105</sup>

When Stalingrad was beyond saving, Gen. Richthofen, chief of Air Fleet 4, 'once more' read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Because he found the chapter on Russian and eastern policy 'very interesting and answering almost all the questions even in today's situation', he made sure that 'greater emphasis [was] put on these arguments' among the troops throughout his command.<sup>106</sup> Another commanding officer, Field Marshal Sperrle, found himself obliged on 1 October 1943 to remind his men what the war was really about—'the life or death of Greater Germany and Europe'.<sup>107</sup> Along with setting an example and providing welfare it was the unit commander's duty to give his men, 'by means of military-political education, that solid inner strength . . . even during the hardest trials'.

However, the Luftwaffe commander-in-chief found that, especially in the flying formations, 'young officers up to Staffel commander frequently displayed diffidence in facing the troops'.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, they lacked training in

<sup>102</sup> LwKdo Ost, Abt II b/Wehrbetreuung of 15 Nov. 1942, lecture by Brosius, BA-MA RL 7/566. At the beginning of November 1942 the Gruppe Wehrbetreuung switched from LwFüSt Ic to the Zentralamtsgruppe under the Chief of the Luftwaffe, with Col. Hans-Henning von Fölkersamb taking over control of it.

<sup>103</sup> Letter from the Ic of 5 Oct. 1942, see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 273.

<sup>104</sup> Letter of 8 Feb. 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 274–5. Comment from October 1942.

<sup>106</sup> Richthofen diary, entry for 6 Jan. 1943, BA-MA N 671/11.

<sup>107</sup> Order of 1 Oct. 1943, BA-MA RLD 24/32.

<sup>108</sup> Remarks on tactics by the Luftwaffe C-in-C *re Wehrgeistige Führung*, order No. 3 of Air Fleet 2 of 27 Sept. 1943, BA-MA RL 7/40a. NCO G.S. gave 'political instruction' in his flak group and to the NCOs of the headquarters company on, for instance, the 'general significance of military-ideological education and the inner causes of the First and Second World Wars' (8 June 1943), making great demands upon himself as an 'educator', repr. in 'Tagebuch des Unteroffiziers G.S.', unpubl. doc., MGFA.

providing psychological care for their men. Yet this was precisely what the long duration of the war required; military welfare alone could neither maintain the striking power of the troops nor 'weld them together in inseparable comradeship and combat readiness in difficult situations'. Air Fleet 3 tried the psychological ploy of having the 'last wishes' of a squadron commander killed in action distributed. The burden of these was the insistent reminder to 'keep their spirits up' in this 'battle of the Titans' for victory or ruin, 'even if things again get tough, very tough. Always remember: the individual is nothing, the Reich is everything . . . Don't let them get you down! And stay faithful to the German *Volk* and our Führer! Then you need fear neither Death nor the Devil!'<sup>109</sup>

As yet the Luftwaffe had found no recipe for 'spiritual guidance' that would have met all military developments and breakdowns in morale. As far as one can tell, it was not the Military Welfare group under Fölkersamb, but the new chief of Dept. VIII (Military Science) of the Luftwaffe general staff, Maj.-Gen. Herhudt von Rhoden, who made great efforts from the autumn of 1943 to emphasize the importance of the 'ideological war', and hence that of military-ideological guidance, alongside the war with weapons and the economic war. He not only tried to propagate these new ideas among the troops and the senior leadership,<sup>110</sup> but also set a good example in his own department.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> 'Beiträge zur wehrpolitischen Erziehung' No. 12/1943 of 18 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RLD 24/43.

<sup>110</sup> Beurteilung des Krieges, No. 7 of 8 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RL 2 IV/66; as well as No. 12 of 31 May 1944, BA-MA RL 2 IV/70.

<sup>111</sup> Lecture to all members of Dept. VIII, 22 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RL 2 IV/65; see Ch. VI of this section; on Rohden see the judgement of Hassell, repr. in Hassell, *Die Hassell-Tagebücher*, 437 (11 July 1944).

## VI. The Shock of Stalingrad and the Crisis of Military-Ideological Leadership

STALINGRAD, which Goebbels described as 'one of the greatest tragedies in German military history',<sup>1</sup> had not only military consequences. The strategic debacle between Don and Volga also resulted in a leadership and confidence crisis in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Stalingrad moreover became the psychological turning point in the war: many Germans, servicemen and civilians, began to feel that this lost battle might come to be the beginning of the end. This did not prevent the Party from exploiting the critical worsening of the military situation to strengthen its own power base, at the most diverse levels and in all political areas of state and society. Transition to 'total war', however, so vociferously announced by Goebbels, was not ultimately risked.<sup>3</sup>

The multiple uses to be made of the battle of Stalingrad had begun at the start of the fighting. In September 1942 it was still planned to proclaim the fall of Stalin's city as a symbol of victory over the Stalinist system; in November Goebbels was hoping to use the impending victory as a massive propaganda counterweight against the western Allies' strategic victories in North Africa, in order to 'restore battered [German] prestige'.<sup>4</sup>

On the tenth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power it was left to Göring to recast the long-concealed annihilation of the Sixth Army as a sacrificial 'heroic struggle' against the Bolshevization of Germany and Europe. This recourse to a myth (the struggle and sacrificial death of the Nibelungs) and to history (that of the Spartans at Thermopylae) neither consoled the surviving men of the Sixth Army, nor was it able to shield the earlier veiled reporting from fierce criticism both at the front and at home in Germany. Nor did it prevent this defeat from being, for the first time, blamed on Hitler personally; after all, everyone had been saying: 'We shall be victorious because Adolf Hitler is leading us.'<sup>5</sup> However, the Wehrmacht and army commander-in-chief was not prepared to accept responsibility for the 'downfall' of an army and the threatening collapse of the entire southern wing of the eastern front. As Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus had declined to commit the Varus-style suicide expected of him, Hitler lacked a scapegoat of the kind he had had in 1941. In 1943 this role had to be taken on by Germany's allies, Romania, Italy, and Hungary.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vii, 3 Feb. 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See Förster, *Stalingrad*.

<sup>3</sup> See Kroener, 'Nun Volk, steh auf!'

<sup>4</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, vi, 10 Nov. 1942.

<sup>5</sup> This was the slogan of the navy for the three-day events on the tenth anniversary of the 'victory of the National Socialist revolution' of 28 Jan. 1943, BA-MA RM 8/1732.

<sup>6</sup> See Förster, *Stalingrad*.

Naturally enough the shock of Stalingrad also affected the 'struggle on the psychological level',<sup>7</sup> moreover at a time when the 'military-ideological guidance' (*wehrgeistige Führung*) ordered by Keitel in July 1942 was not yet being practised everywhere.<sup>8</sup> The military leadership was kept informed of morale among the troops and the private attitude of the men, both by the proficient feedback from the various armies' censors of the soldiers' mail, and by the reports from commanding officers and front-line tours by selected officers. There were also the reports from psychiatric consultants with the army doctors, who reported on the 'psychological state of troops' and who, whenever necessary, advised commanding officers on matters of mass psychology.<sup>9</sup>

Hitler and his military advisers were thus certain in their knowledge that the morale inside the Stalingrad pocket during the relief attempt was still '90 per cent calm . . . , confident . . . [and] prepared for sacrifice'. By late December 1942/early January 1943 morale had however declined by 20 per cent, and only 'in many places testified to the heroic will to hold out until victory'. It was not only the physical strength of individuals that had 'visibly diminished . . . A great many [seemed] to be psychologically at the end of their tether.' Letters of farewell and 'expressions of last wishes' were multiplying. After the rejection of the Soviet invitation to capitulate and the crushing of the pocket nearly all of them were losing courage; hopelessness was spreading.

Yet on 16 January 1943 a major still wrote to his wife: 'The implacable struggle continues, God helps the brave! Whatever Providence may ordain, we ask for one thing, for strength to hold on! Let it be said of us one day that the German army fought at Stalingrad as soldiers never before in the world have fought. To pass this spirit on to our children is the task of mothers.'<sup>10</sup> Testimonies like this were seen by the chief of the Wehrmacht operations

<sup>7</sup> This was the title of a lecture by Lersner at one of the company commanders' courses in Gzhatsk on 22 Dec. 1942; a month later it was distributed as a first 'Guideline for the military-ideological leadership of the troops' by the OKH for the ABOs and DBOs; BA-MA RH 19 III 490. On the 'Idea as a weapon' see 'Gedankenskizze der Vorträge über wehrgeistige Führung', BA-MA RW 6/v. 275, and Keppelmüller, 'Zur geistigen Kriegsbereitschaft', 470. At the beginning of January 1943 a lecture by reserve Maj. Altstötter—not by Lersner, as believed by Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 54—on 'National Socialist education for the troops', was distributed in the Fourth Army, initially only to ABOs but later down to unit commanders. At the same time the first edition of a new 'guidance' knapsack book from the OKW, *Was uns bewegt: Fragen der Weltanschauung, Geschichte und Kultur*, was published for officers. It was the task and duty of every commanding officer to apply it in the right way in his political guidance.

<sup>8</sup> Army Command Norway, for instance, did not order military-ideological guidance until 8 Feb. 1943, and then only 'as a trial' where suitable persons were available as DBOs. They were to apply the experience of the Third Panzer Army in order to 'arm the men psychologically more strongly than hitherto against the impact and hardness of the long-lasting war', BA-MA RW 4/v. 258.

<sup>9</sup> See the extensive holding of files, BA-MA RH 12-23; Berger, *Die Beratenden Psychiater des deutschen Heeres*, 172 ff.; Müller, *Wege zum Ruhm*.

<sup>10</sup> Postal censorship report for the period 12 to 17 Jan. 1943, *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 19; the other two reports for the period 14 Dec. 1942 to 9 Jan. 1943 are repr. in *Stalingrad: Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, 92-7.

staff, Gen. Jodl, as 'the quintessence of the highest soldierly quality and unconditional readiness for sacrifice' that had to be drawn on for continuing the war. They were to provide the foundation of a new 'spiritual attitude' in the German people.<sup>11</sup>

Much thought was also given in the army affairs department of the OKH to the new task of ideological guidance after Stalingrad. The need was to strengthen the men's will to attack by appealing to the 'innermost forces residing within the troops'. For the author of the draft of 2 February 1943<sup>12</sup> (who could well be Lersner), of course, the National Socialist 'vision as a weapon, and the man bearing arms as the exponent of that vision, [were] the enduring insights into the attitude and self-sacrifice of the army at Stalingrad'. See, he said, 'what German men can achieve' if they 'do not falter in their faith in their own vision, and in the right this gives them'. The bequest of the Stalingrad fighters was seen in 'bringing our thinking and our will to that inner firmness and faith without which a life-and-death war cannot be won'.

With considerable criticism of the previous over-optimistic conduct of the war, 'the fighting spirit, reaching the heroic, evident during this winter' was seen as a symptom of the inner development of German soldiery. The task now was to intensify welfare and psychological guidance for the young replacement troops, and to deepen the link between those at home and at the front. The toughened warrior was to boost morale on the home front. 'The crucial means [for this] is letters and leave.' Entirely in line with this demand on taking the lead, a corporal in a supply company with the 36th Infantry Division wrote to his family: 'All of us, we at the front and you at home, have only to strive to our utmost to back our leadership in everything. If we do that, victory will be granted to us. We aren't going to get victory as a gift, it will have to be achieved by struggle and a great deal of sacrifice' (21 February 1943).<sup>13</sup> A Luftwaffe NCO saw not so much the 'hardened warrior', but blamed the collapse of the men's morale on the gulf between officers and other ranks, as well as on the lack of political schooling.<sup>14</sup>

A minute from the army affairs department saw yet another way of linking home and front in cooperation between Wehrmacht and Party. Only one who had been in the First World War, it was said on 2 February 1943, could see how much difference there was between then and now. Whereas then he knew 'there were behind himself ten or more conflicting parties all fighting each other', there was now only one NSDAP 'holding everyone together while charged with protecting the homeland'. Far more critical in his assessment

<sup>11</sup> Order of 1 Feb. 1943 for a 'suitably' worded announcement by the OKW, in the former Special Archive, Moscow, 1424-1-1. See Förster, *Stalingrad*, 13. On 31 May 1943 Hitler decided against this because the 'course of operations around Stalingrad could not be described without making a value judgement on our allies' (letter from Keitel, 1 June 1943), BA-MA W 01-6/591.

<sup>12</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. Jodl's order cannot be seen as the direct trigger for this text.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted from Humburg, *Das Gesicht des Krieges*, 398.

<sup>14</sup> Diary of NCO G.S., entry for 9 Feb. 1943.

than the officers in the army affairs department was Cap. Hosenfeld in Warsaw: 'Everything the Nazis are doing, what Hitler is doing, is the most total dilettantism. If he preaches the dogma and the primacy of race, then he must ensure its preservation and not its ruin.'<sup>15</sup>

Although Maj. von Lersner had made an unvarnished report on morale in the Sixteenth Army as recently as 25 January 1943,<sup>16</sup> he was again sent to the front at the beginning of February 1943, this time to Army Group Centre. His brief was to discover what morale was like after Stalingrad, observe the work of military-ideological leadership, and give lectures to the troops.<sup>17</sup> His report of 21 February 1943 contains answers only to the first point of his brief, and is a mixture of observations drawing critical distinctions, and of assessments suggesting future action.

According to Lersner the psychological condition of the troops after Stalingrad was 'properly described by neither the word "morale", nor "attitude". Argument within themselves would be the clearest way of describing the content and depth of what was going on in the mind and spirit of both officers and men.' This had to do not with what the war was for, but with how it was being conducted, and with questions 'of our own strength, that of the enemy, and the outcome of this trial of strength'. And 'the more perception there is [within the soldier] and the more responsibility is being borne [by him], the deeper this goes'. While overall morale and strength of the will for combat undoubtedly depended on one's own successes in battle, the 'debate with himself' raged very much more in the officer than in the other ranks. A distinction needed to be made between front-line and staff officers. The officer at the front judged the military situation more or less on the basis of what he was experiencing on his own front, but often suppressed in himself questions about the overall situation, 'since worrying about that [was] pointless'. Staff officers, on the other hand, were faced with a more serious internal debate. They could see that the Soviet adversary had been underestimated for a second time, that extending the southern wing of the eastern front was overtaking the strength of Germany and its allies, and that 'precious human resources' had been 'used up'. From this the officer came to realize 'that the war in the East [could] be won militarily only if it [was] at the same time waged politically'.

However, Lersner's report also touched on another raw nerve in the German conduct of the war—Hitler's intervening in the conduct of field operations, and the ruling out of operational and tactical initiative. This was threatening

<sup>15</sup> Hosenfeld, '*Ich versuche jeden zu retten*', entry for 3. Mar. 1943.

<sup>16</sup> Conversations with Sixteenth Army, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. One general staff officer had told him: 'I don't understand what's going on any more. Stalingrad is madness. I had to get this out of me. Now I must get back to work.' See also Lersner's report on the conference of Sixteenth Army DBOs, 25 Jan. 1943, *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Trip to Fourth and Ninth Armies and Third Panzer Army, 3–20 Feb. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/50; see 'Richtlinien zur Handhabung der wehrgeistigen Führung beim PzAOK 3', 20 Feb. 1943, BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 455.

the greatest value of Prussian-German soldiering, one that had often led to victory—the ‘cheerful sense of responsibility’ in the tactical sphere.<sup>18</sup> The staff officer felt ‘that deep down, the reason for the defeat in the south [lay] somehow in the lack of any inner connection between the supreme command and those leading the troops in the field’. This feeling was in conflict with his avowal of National Socialism and with his ‘respect and love for Adolf Hitler as Führer and creator of the Reich, of whom there [could] ultimately be no criticism’.

Lersner quotes an officer who, in his opinion, judged soberly and toughly: ‘Obviously, we shall make it. But it’s crucial that there’s a change in the link between the Führer and ourselves. But who can achieve that?’ Lersner’s answer to that question simultaneously contained the programme of military-ideological leadership as he understood it—responsible assignment of suitable army welfare officers (ABOs) and divisional welfare officers (DBOs) with clearly defined ‘combat, training, and educational tasks’, as well as the creation of direct links between Hitler and the forces, and between the Führer and Party, ‘through occasionally bringing together the liveliest and keenest elements in the divisions and the divisional and army welfare officers’. There, they should be given ideological guidance from Hitler himself, so as to carry back ‘to the troops a picture of the Führer from their own experience’. Hitler’s personal appearance among the troops, and his personal thanks for what they have accomplished, would have a decisive effect on the men’s combat morale and ‘overcome the gaps and losses the heavy struggle against the Russian opponent had brought’. Lersner’s suggestion fell on fruitful soil to the extent that Hitler in an order of the day expressed his personal thanks to the men of Army Groups South and Centre, as well as to the Luftwaffe units involved.<sup>19</sup> The army welfare officers were assembled in Berlin for a second time in July 1943 and given ‘ideological orientation’—though not by Hitler personally. Nor did the Führer make use of the opportunity of speaking during the first course for ‘front-line lecturers’ in Sonthofen in late May and early June 1943, or of addressing the troops directly. This left room for Goebbels to make his mark with the public at home in the ‘struggle at ideological level’—on 18 February 1943, when he asked his famous ten leading questions in the ‘Do you want total war?’ speech.<sup>20</sup>

The interaction between front and homeland was seen in a different light by the commander of a sector where things were still quiet. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt pointed out that, while the ‘stress of enemy terror raids on the home country’ naturally weighed just as heavily on the men in France, ‘it has to be said that here, too, the support often comes from the *soldier*,

<sup>18</sup> But this had been given up by the turn of 1941/2 at the latest, with the help of the chief of the army general staff and his helpers in the field. See Ch. IV of this section, Groß, ‘Dogma der Beweglichkeit’, and Förster, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*.

<sup>19</sup> Order of the day, 20 Mar. 1943, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 552.

<sup>20</sup> See Fetscher, *Joseph Goebbels*. In August 1943 Dönitz too advised Hitler to address the nation.



as proved in the homeland'. In spite of it being the fifth year of the war, 'morale and attitude, as well as confidence, among the troops [were] gratifyingly good'.<sup>21</sup>

The army affairs department's other proposal of 2 February 1943, to deepen the link between home and front through soldiers' written or personal contacts, was not pursued. On the contrary: towards the end of March 1943 the head of the army personnel office, Schmundt, found himself compelled to issue a sharp order. He reminded the officers of their duty 'to strengthen attitude, morale, and will to resist, not only among the forces but also in their dealings with the civilian population at home', and not to intensify the 'great agitation caused among the German public' after Stalingrad by 'so-called factual accounts' of combat activity and events at the front. 'An officer who, by critical fault-finding or disparaging judgements on the military or political leadership, makes himself guilty of undermining our military strength is no longer acceptable as an officer.'<sup>22</sup> Unlike the army personnel department, the army affairs department noted harmful effects produced by those at home on the morale of the troops, and stressed the 'need for ideological guidance by the Party'.<sup>23</sup>

Not only the army high command but also several commanding officers at the front were of the opinion that ideological and spiritual guidance of the troops needed to be intensified. They were concerned not with purely educational subjects, but with the treatment of political issues that had a direct bearing on the military situation. Thus Gen. Heinrici, commanding the Fourth Army, wanted to see subjects such as 'The meaning of the war', 'Our enemies' war aims', 'You and total war', 'There can be no compromise', and 'What are we fighting for?' in particular regularly discussed. In doing so, divisional welfare officers should 'present military reverses as understandable and inevitable in the course of a war, while being not decisive for the final outcome. They should choose good examples from German military history, such as Frederick the Great in the Seven Years War.' At the same time the DBOs should strengthen 'confidence in the Führer and in the National Socialist leadership of the state'.<sup>24</sup>

For the 'very strong and four-square personalities'—as Goebbels described Generals Dietl and Schörner—'National Socialism and true soldierdom were one and the same thing'. While the soldier needed weapons and ammunitions to fight with, it was only the shared ideological basis that enabled him to 'comprehend the real meaning of the war'.<sup>25</sup> Just as an officer who still

<sup>21</sup> Situation assessment by OB West, 25 Oct. 1943, Section G: Stimmung der Truppe, repr. in Ose, *Entscheidung im Westen*, 300.

<sup>22</sup> OKH/HPA, Ag P2 Chefgr., 29 Mar. 1943, BA-MA RL 5/793; see Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 55; Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 314.

<sup>23</sup> Lecture by chief of the army general staff, 16 June 1943, BA-MA RH 13/4. The army was prepared to make front-line soldiers available as speakers for this purpose. See order by Reinecke of 25 Oct. 1943 and guidelines for the employment of speakers in all three Wehrmacht services, BA-MA RH 36/552.

<sup>24</sup> Directive No. 1 for DBOs, 27 Jan. 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>25</sup> Dietl's order of 21 Feb. 1943, BA-MA RH 19 III/491.

viewed National Socialism as 'an imposed form of ideological and intellectual attitude' had failed in his task, so every serviceman must clearly 'recognize the National Socialist vision and fight for it with passionate conviction in word and deed'.<sup>26</sup>

Gen. Lothar Rendulic, commanding XXXV Army Corps, likewise considered the results of the troops' military-ideological guidance so far to be 'poor and inadequate'. Only when the soldier, officer and man alike, was 'convinced of the principles that embrace our entire life interests', when despite great physical and psychological stress, he 'time and again copes' with critical situations and 'becomes the exponent of his nation's political will'—only then had he had the right military-ideological guidance, and only then would he pass the 'mercilessly hard test of destiny' in a struggle that would decide 'whether the German nation would live or be finally exterminated'.<sup>27</sup> Rendulic saw the real reason why many unit commanders were providing merely 'spiritual care' instead of 'military-ideological leadership' was because they were not fully up to their task of being 'also the political leaders and educators of their men'. He therefore gave orders that, as from April 1943, each division was to organize three courses of fourteen days each; their educational objective was 'to give all participants a solid basis of political knowledge that will enable them to show their men convincingly where the foundations of our life lie'. On 25 May 1943 the first fortnight's course for the 'schooling of speakers for military-ideological guidance of the troops' was set up at corps headquarters.<sup>28</sup>

Like Rendulic, Gen. Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, commander-in-chief of AOK Norway, was well aware that there were 'many young and inexperienced unit commanders, unskilled' in the field of military-ideological leadership. Nevertheless, their 'inalienable right' to lead their men 'in the military-ideological struggle' as well was not to be encroached upon. It was simply the task of the divisional welfare officer not only to 'advise the commander in this urgent matter', but also to provide the company commanders with the relevant 'material, to procure that material, or else to extract and offer whatever is important or needed from what happens to be available. However, the divisional welfare officer is not a commissar or itinerant preacher. He speaks to the officers on behalf of the divisional commander, and addresses the men of a unit only when so ordered by him'.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Special order No. 10 of 1 Feb. 1943, repr. in: Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 3. Schörner spoke not of 'military-ideological guidance' but of 'National Socialist education'. Martin Bormann distributed this 'noteworthy order' to the Party's leadership corps on 7 July 1943.

<sup>27</sup> Order of 4 Apr. 1943 *re* 'wehrggeistige Führung', BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. As early as 1925 Rendulic, then a major in the Austrian Federal Army, commented on 'conscious attention to the psychological factor' by the military leader and on the 'psychology of discipline'. The point Rendulic had made earlier in 1943 was also raised by OKW's *Mitteilungen für das Offizierkorps* No. 15 of March 1943, with its insistence: 'We must be political officers!', profoundly imbued with the stronger, more moral, idea of National Socialism as against the hate-filled destructive will of Bolshevism, BA-MA RW 4/v. 356.

<sup>28</sup> BA-MN RH 24-35/107, app. 2a.

<sup>29</sup> AOK Norway, Ic of 10 Apr. 1943, sgd. Falkenhorst, BA-MA RW 4/v. 258.

The military leadership and the commanding officers at the front were not the only ones to worry about the 'total and necessary *unity* of motivations of *all* servicemen . . . as the most important foundation of victory'; a number of individual officers felt the same. For instance Cap. von Hößlin, an artilleryman in the 7th Infantry Division (Second Panzer Army) wrote directly to the home affairs department in the General Wehrmacht Office, to say that it was a delusion to think that all officers were convinced of the importance of ideological guidance, or that every company or battery commander was teaching his men about the meaning of the war. 'No, the majority of them are sinning in this matter to an incredible degree.'<sup>30</sup> The reason, according to Hößlin, was that the older officers came 'from the [Reichswehr] days of apolitical soldiering', that ideological training was not instilled into the young officers as a main task at the service colleges, that unit commanders were receiving too little stimulus to undertake ideological teaching, and that only a few officers were capable of 'creatively and from within themselves presenting ideological ideas, in a suitable form and of usable content, to 150 men'. Pointing to the position that political teaching held in the Red Army's training system, Hößlin proposed that ideological schooling be intensified in all courses for officers, officer candidates, and company and battalion commanders. Gen. von Falkenhorst had already drawn attention to the large number of specialized personnel employed by the Russians in this area in order to win the 'decisive struggle of ideologies'. The Luftwaffe NCO G.S. likewise noted that the Red Army seemed to be superior to the Wehrmacht where 'psychological resilience and confidence in victory' were concerned.<sup>31</sup>

Even the SS noted with envy how consistently ideological schooling was given in the Red Army, and how successfully 'this unprecedented will to resistance' was implanted in the Russian soldier. Given that many young volunteers had not been adequately equipped by their parental home, Berger, head of the SS Central Office, proposed that the ideological and political education of the Waffen-SS should be made a permanent and major component of the men's general training.<sup>32</sup> Himmler found the enclosed draft of the order 'excellent' but recast it somewhat, as he informed Berger on 24 February. That same day Himmler also issued an order that placed ideological schooling in the Waffen-SS and police on a new basis. With a clear allusion to the Russian enemy he ordered that 'all our commanders, officers, and men be educated to be ever more fanatical and convinced bearers of the National Socialist ideology, of the vision of our Führer Adolf Hitler'. The example given by commanding officers continued to be regarded as the most important element. Instruction and direction of every kind, designed to educate every member of the SS into a 'convinced fighter, ideologically proof against any crisis, one who stands and

<sup>30</sup> Letter of 10 May 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 156 (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> Diary of NCO G.S., entry for 9 Feb. 1943.

<sup>32</sup> Letter of 10 Feb. 1943 with draft text of order, BA NS 19/281.

fights alert and unbowed at good and bad moments in the war', came only in second place.<sup>33</sup>

How serious Himmler was about the ideological education of his SS men can also be gauged from the way he upbraided SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Freitag, commanding the 'Florian Geyer' SS Cavalry Division, on 9 March 1943 because he had failed to devote the necessary attention to this matter: 'We find ourselves here in the SS. You are not dealing with an army division. Therefore I would advise you to follow the example of the Russians . . . Are you still living in the world of 1914?'<sup>34</sup>

In the replacement army 'military-ideological leadership' was similarly still in a bad way, as emerged from a conference in Berlin in mid-April 1943 of officials dealing with this. In only a few military districts had it been possible to find suitable officers, able to tackle military ideological guidance vigorously and set it in motion.<sup>35</sup> In military district XIII, for instance, the commanding officer had obtained from the Party people to undertake the 'ideological education of the officer corps'.<sup>36</sup> The commander-in-chief of the replacement army, Fromm, was therefore touching up the picture when, in his basic instruction of 14 May 1943, he said that the measures already taken by the army corps's military district commands would meet 'the growing importance of this task'.<sup>37</sup> He too wanted to see the men trained in the replacement army 'fight and be victorious in the coming battles'. To achieve this goal, 'military-ideological warfare' was to be intensified. The 'political leadership task' of the officer corps was in no way a programme born of military necessity, but one stemming 'from the revolutionary reshaping of our age'. That was correct only to the extent that the military crisis on the eastern front was, in May 1943, considered to have been overcome. The aim of the 'exclusively political-ideological-National Socialist' military and spiritual guidance was the 'mobilization of the officer corps for ceaseless work on themselves and on the men entrusted to them'. Fromm laid down the following criteria for those to be made 'military-ideological guidance officers': a tried and tested front-line officer, a National Socialist activist, with an energetic personality, the ability to put his ideas over to others by word of mouth and in writing, and enthusiasm for his task. Rank was an unimportant criterion for selection. In order to set military-ideological guidance in the replacement army on the right track, three qualified officers were assigned to give 'schooling conferences' in May-June 1943 at corps HQs in the Reich, Bohemia-Moravia, Denmark, and the Government-General: Lt.-Col.

<sup>33</sup> SS order of 24 Feb. 1943, VHA Prague, Waffen-SS training dept., box 1; see Wegner, *Waffen-SS*, 209 ff., and Förster, 'Weltanschauliche Erziehung', 108.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from Wegner, *Waffen-SS*, 213 n. 329.

<sup>35</sup> Short report of 17 Apr. 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>36</sup> Order of 23 Dec. 1942, BA-MA RW 17/137; see this in practice in Würzburg on 24 Jan. 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 4, though without Fromm's signature, BA-MA RH 53-17/138a. On the implementation of this order in military district VII see the commanding officers' conference of 28/9 June 1943, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 1207.

Dr Ellenbeck from the Wehrmacht propaganda department, Maj. von Lersner from the army affairs department, and Lt. Dr Ibbecken, military-ideological guidance officer Ic with III Army Corps HQ in Berlin.

To assist the officer in coping with his task of 'inner warfare' the brochure *Der Offizier und seine Rekruten* [The Officer and his Recruits] was published in March 1943. Its author, Dr Ellenbeck, believed that one of the most essential preconditions was a close and trusting relationship between the officer and his men, one that should be established already in the Wehrmacht's replacement formations.<sup>38</sup> But that was not enough. Officers would also have to be 'political persons' if they were to be up to their task of being 'torch bearers', carrying ahead of their soldiers on the nation's hard road of struggle the flame of the realization that the 'fateful struggle between National Socialism and Bolshevism' must be fought until the hour of victory. Ellenbeck's booklet *Der Offizier als Führer im Kampf gegen die feindliche Propaganda* [The Officer as Leader in the Struggle against Enemy Propaganda] had appeared even earlier. In it the Wehrmacht high command staff officer and former *Oberstudiendirektor* (headmaster) demanded that the soldier should 'devote himself body and soul to this total war'. Total war, of course, included total uniformity in man management.<sup>39</sup>

This, however, had not yet been accomplished in the army even a year after Keitel's order. Whereas some armies had already submitted reports, others were still having difficulties with military-ideological guidance. As no ABOs had been appointed in them, the subordinate DBOs could not be trained following uniform principles. One of the armies in whose judgement military-ideological guidance had 'proved extremely successful' was the Fourth Army. However, in its commander-in-chief's opinion subject knowledge, schooling arrangements, or the right instruction were not in themselves sufficient 'for rousing from his apathy or indeed enthusing the *individual man*, who is often subject to the most severe psychological stress, let alone for grabbing him in the only place it matters—in his attitude, his will, and his faith'. Gen. Heinrich, who had found 'a great need' for military-ideological guidance among his troops, defined this 'essential and decisive military leadership task' as 'exerting a truly motivated and guiding influence on the bearing of the troops', while remaining 'in control of developments', ensuring 'that the men think and act, and react to everything that happens, in a way that meets the needs of the war and the intentions of the leadership'.<sup>40</sup> As for the military-ideological side of its responsibilities, the army affairs department at the end of May accepted that the 'important systematic work' on the entire eastern front could not begin until the autumn of 1943.<sup>41</sup> In order to ensure the desired uniformity, central

<sup>38</sup> BA-MA RW 15/88; see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 316–17.

<sup>39</sup> N.p., 1943. For an assessment of Ellenbeck see the smug judgement of SS-Gruppenführer Berger of 18 Apr. 1943, BA NS 19/3871.

<sup>40</sup> Report of 18 June 1943, BA-MA RH 19 III/491.

<sup>41</sup> *Re Wehrgeistige Führung* (25 May 1943), BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

directives were sent out to the forces from 1 June 1943;<sup>42</sup> moreover, Keitel sent his newly appointed general (special duties), Maj.-Gen. Walter Jost to Army Group South,<sup>43</sup> and the ABOs were summoned to Berlin by the army high command for a central conference.

This conference on military-ideological leadership in the army was a mixture of landmark lectures 'from above', experience reports by army welfare officers 'from below', and an exchange of views.<sup>44</sup> One of the speakers was Col. Rudolf Hübner, commanding the 529th Grenadier Regiment. He reported on how he was schooling his company commanders and men to be 'fanatical followers of Adolf Hitler and believers in God', thereby shaping the regiment into a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*—a 'community linked by fate'. It is not known whether Hübner had already run one of the courses ordered by Gen. Rendulic at the beginning of April 1943; at all events, he was seen as an 'enthusiastic National Socialist, striving in a praiseworthy manner to convey his attitude to his subordinates as well'.<sup>45</sup> In fact, Dr Hübner had—like Rendulic—been a Party member since 1932, and had made contacts with the army personnel department and the SS as early as May 1943 in order to promote ideological schooling in the army on the SS model.<sup>46</sup> Hübner's initiative was, along with others, to acquire historical effect.

The Party too had long been worried about ideological schooling in the Wehrmacht. It did, however, note with some self-criticism that links between Party authorities in the homeland and Party members in the Wehrmacht had been severed in the course of the war. In consequence, the 'Party had lately neglected a very important factor in the political activizing of the Wehrmacht'.<sup>47</sup> So as to let the Wehrmacht make use of this political factor, as the Party saw it, agreement was reached on 8 May 1943 between the chief of the Wehrmacht high command and the head of the Party secretariat: orders were issued for an 'orientation course' for 'roughly 300 political leaders and speakers' of the Party who had proved and distinguished themselves at the front. The purpose of these 'special measures' was to provide 'for the whole

<sup>42</sup> The directives are identical with No. 10 of 'Unterlagen zur wehrgeistigen Führung der Truppe', BA-MA RH 17/v. 77.

<sup>43</sup> BA-MAN 712/10, entry for 26 June 1943. Jost had concerned himself with ideological warfare as early as 1934–8 in the Reichswehr ministry (later the Reich war ministry). In spring 1944 Keitel commended him as the 'best type of front-line soldier' and an 'especially sterling and reliable character holding, for many years, profoundly rooted National Socialist basic views and attitude', BA-MA Pers 6/653.

<sup>44</sup> Overall agenda of the conference of 6–10 July 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407, RH 19 III/491 and RH 53–21/21. On criticism by the SS, which sent two participants, see BA NS 19/3864. A further central conference was held at the beginning of December 1943 at OKH HQ in Zossen. See Ch. VII of this section.

<sup>45</sup> Rendulic's assessment of 20 May 1943, NA, RG 1027. Hübner's divisional commander, too, emphasized on 19 June 1943 that Hübner was 'an enthusiastic National Socialist [and] excellent teacher and educator of the officer corps and the troops'.

<sup>46</sup> Memo of May 1943 and letters of 16 June 1943 and 15 July 1943, BA NS 19/750.

<sup>47</sup> Memo from Passe of 14 Apr. 1943, quoted in his memo of 23 Jan. 1944, BA NS 6/150. The Party's real person for ideological schooling, Rosenberg, was not involved. See the note on his meeting with Bormann on 20 May 1943, BA NS 8/188.



Wehrmacht a prescribed phraseology for military and political questions concerning the front and the homeland, but above all, proceeding from political necessity, also to revitalize among all troops in the homeland and at the front the meaning and goal of our struggle'.<sup>48</sup>

For this the Party made the 'Order Castle' at Sonthofen available.<sup>49</sup> The holding of this course and the subsequent employment of the speakers were tasks of the Wehrmacht high command, or the home affairs department of the General Wehrmacht Office. This instance of practical cooperation between Party and Wehrmacht in the field of ideological warfare therefore served the purpose of (1) providing a 'political-ideological armoury' to selected Party members in uniform, (2) giving them a 'prescribed phraseology on certain military and political events', and (3) telling them 'about the homeland, its attitude and achievements'.<sup>50</sup> Once the participants had been 'charged up like a battery', the stored energy was to be passed on to the troops at the front, in the rear-area services, and, more especially, to the young replacement troops in Germany, in order to arm them for the struggle ahead of them. The participants in the 'orientation course', or (in Goebbels' phrase) 'front-line speaker course', at Sonthofen from 31 May to 5 June 1943 were therefore some 300 experienced speakers and political leaders of the NSDAP in uniform, moreover drawn from all of the Wehrmacht services. They were addressed by one Reich leader, one Reich minister, one Reich commissioner, two undersecretaries of state, two Gauleiters, and other senior Party functionaries, as well as by one field marshal, three generals or admirals, and one colonel.

The 'best minds' from the Wehrmacht, the state, and the Party would speak 'the hard language of facts' and speak with brutal frankness, 'without glossing over or fudging . . . I need only mention here the names of Stalingrad and Tunis, and you will immediately understand what I mean', said Gen. Reinecke, chief of the General Wehrmacht Office, in his opening lecture.<sup>51</sup> 'We want you to leave here with even greater and firmer faith, with rock-steady confidence in the soundness of our cause and in our final victory.' The task now was 'to make every last man in the German Wehrmacht into a believer. Only a believer, convinced of Germany's greatness and the justification of our proud racial National Socialist ideology, will in the long run stand up to the enemy' and thus be invincible. Reinecke further assumed that these believing soldiers would write home in this spirit of believing, and that the front would thus become 'the appeal to the strength of those at home'. It was Hitler's wish that the soldiers should 'learn to think politically and to interpret whatever

<sup>48</sup> Carbon copy of an information memo from Pässe to Bormann, sent to Goebbels on 15 May 1943 by the chief of staff of the Reich propaganda directorate Eugen Hadamovsky, BA NS 18/14.

<sup>49</sup> About the same time the NSDAP assembled war invalids at the 'Order Castle' at Crössinsee in Pomerania in order to 'orient [them] ideologically' for their later full-time employment in the Party, BA Sammlung Schumacher/433.

<sup>50</sup> Pässe's memorandum of 21 May 1943, BA-MA RW 6/157. Sonthofen had already been envisaged as a schooling venue by Rosenberg.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, see short version, BA NS 6/157.



happened politically'. In this sense, Reinecke added, 'we want to be political, but not to politicize'. The soldier was 'a National Socialist as a matter of course, even if he does not carry a Party membership book'.

When Lt.-Gen. Schmudt had lectured on the principles of 'Analysis of the leader in the Wehrmacht',<sup>52</sup> the next speaker was an exemplary product of this personnel policy—Col. Magnus Peltz, just 29 years of age and 'Attack Leader England' holding the post of an army corps commander; he spoke on the situation in the air war. Another situation, the 'security situation in the Reich', was discussed by the Reich leader SS and chief of the German police. Openly, as Reinecke had announced, Himmler explained the extermination of the European Jews: only 'the territory that has no Jews on it is safe against all revolution'. In the struggle against 'subhumanity', in which Himmler included along with the Jews also freemasons and criminals, 'hardness, racial separateness, and politically especially well-educated soldiers' were needed. Himmler called on his listeners to 'stand up for their SS comrades who are employed on these tasks and ordered to perform them against their will'.<sup>53</sup>

What front and homeland needed 'in order to raise the inward mood' was not so much ideological schooling as, in Zeitzler's words, 'a few [ordinary] victories'. However, the expected great victory at Kursk, intended to restore German 'military prestige before the world'<sup>54</sup> and act upon the latter like a 'beacon',<sup>55</sup> failed to materialize; Operation ZITADELLE was yet another major offensive on the eastern front that did not succeed. Many an older officer may well have been reminded of the offensive of spring 1918. National Socialist Germany was forced militarily on the defensive, and its Führer compelled strategically 'to muddle through'.<sup>56</sup> To ensure this, Hitler demanded from the political leadership the same courageous attitude as was demonstrated by the troops at the front.<sup>57</sup> Goebbels expressed his conviction that the young officers, who had all passed through the National Socialist school, would if it came to it 'defend the Reich tooth and nail'.<sup>58</sup> This view was shared by only some of the SS recruitment officers when the 1925 year group was called up. In twenty-three camps of the Reich labour service they found that, while a few boys did weep at being classified unfit for active service because of some physical defect, others were delighted at the decision. In short, the SS recruitment officers judged that the young men lacked idealism for the German cause,

<sup>52</sup> The date of this speech given in Schmudt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 64, needs to be corrected: for 2 May read 2 June 1943.

<sup>53</sup> BA NS 6/157.  
<sup>54</sup> Thus Goebbels and the chief of the army general staff, Gen. Kurt Zeitzler, on 26 June 1943, Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, pt. 2, v, 21 Sept. 1942. Hitler, addressing the commanders-in-chief of the army groups on 1 July 1943, believed that it was 'of decisive importance for a success to be achieved come what may, one that would overcome all these elements of depression among our allies and secret hopes among the subjugated' (VHZG, 2 (1954), 3099).

<sup>55</sup> Operational order No. 6 of 15 Apr. 1943, Klink, *Das Gesetz des Handelns*, 292. See the section by Karl-Heinz Frieser in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, viii (English edition still to be published).

<sup>56</sup> Thus Dönitz and Hitler in agreement on 8 July 1943, *KTB SKL*, pt. 1 A, xlvii.

<sup>57</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, ix, 27 July 1943.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 July 1943.

though they accepted active service as a duty. Himmler saw the cause of this lack of enthusiasm as lying in Christian education; it had, he believed, plainly and systematically poisoned the minds of German youth. The NSDAP had 'not sufficiently opposed' this negative influence 'by positive ideological education . . . in the war'.<sup>59</sup> Thus the ball of blame, hit from an unexpected quarter, landed again in the Party's court. Even though the hoped-for beacon of Kursk had failed to materialize, there had at least in Goebbels's opinion been a successful 'orientation of our front-line speakers'. This was indeed necessary, 'because [there is] at this moment a certain tendency for a more pessimistic assessment of the war to reach the front from those at home than is warranted by the facts'.<sup>60</sup> It seems that Goebbels was wrongly informed, since the troops too regarded military-ideological guidance from above as insufficient.

In the late summer of 1943 the Eighth Army gave vent to its irritation and complained in writing about how military-ideological guidance and information policy was being handled by the OKW and OKH. This had been triggered off by a letter sent by the 3rd Panzer Division to III Panzer Corps on 31 August 1943. The defeat at Kursk and the Red Army's successful offensive had raised among the German soldiers 'questions about the sense and meaning of certain measures, questions to which they were but rarely able to find a convincing answer'.<sup>61</sup> The corps endorsed this criticism on all points, adding that 'especially in difficult times' there should be 'established, alongside the closed ranks on the weapons front, an equally closed-rank spiritual front'. This was not happening because the information material from above (*Mitteilungen für die Truppe* or *für das Offizierkorps*) mostly failed to deal with the core of the men's questions about the 'why', and moreover reached the troops too late. Many commanding officers and unit commanders had tried to fill those gaps 'on the spiritual front'. However, it was impossible to establish and hold a 'clear and uniform line' since, 'because of the heavy losses of officers, unit commanders were frequently changing, most of them being very young and lacking the necessary experience and insights into the wider picture that might enable them to exert [spiritual] influence on the men, who are often older than them'.<sup>62</sup>

The commander-in-chief of the Eighth Army, Gen. Wöhler, pointed out that 'military-ideological guidance by the OKW has been inadequate for months. It is no longer topical. [The front-line soldier] wants to know the truth.' Thus, for instance, Hitler's order for launching Operation ZITADELLE (Kursk) had been read to the troops, but its failure had been hushed up. Wöhler considered it necessary for the officials in charge of 'military-ideological guidance' in the Wehrmacht high command personally to collect 'at the front' the material

<sup>59</sup> Letter to Bormann, 14 May 1943, BA NS 19/3871. I am grateful to my friend Bernhard R. Kroener for this reference.

<sup>60</sup> Letter of 13 July 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Letter to Eighth Army, 6 Sept. 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> BA-MA RH 13/10.

needed for their future work. For months there had been no 'authoritative representative of propaganda and welfare' among his troops.<sup>63</sup>

The commander-in-chief of Army Group South, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, endorsed the Eighth Army's report of 10 September 'on all points', and submitted it to both the chief of the Wehrmacht high command and the chief of the army general staff. Manstein too believed that, 'with the extension of the duration of the war, deliberate military-ideological guidance, topical propaganda, and realistic war reporting' were indispensable for the front-line soldier.<sup>64</sup> These demands were not new. Thus on 22 September 1943 the army affairs department in a memorandum for Zeitzler stated in its justification that perhaps even the Eighth Army would now realize the value of 'systematic military-ideological guidance, as the OKH had been calling for for more than a year'. This did, of course, depend on the right choice of ABO.<sup>65</sup>

This clear hint about faulty choice of personnel in the Eighth Army was also taken up by Field Marshal Keitel in his reply to Manstein. The OKH had meanwhile dispatched Maj. von Lersner to the Eighth Army 'to instruct the officers for military-ideological guidance. It may be expected that an improvement is already being achieved as a result.' Besides—the chief of the OKW complained—the Eighth Army's newspaper for its front-line troops could 'be much more vigorous in presenting the key issues of our day (such as the Jewish question, or the struggle against plutocracy)'.<sup>66</sup>

Before Gen. Wöhler had Keitel's answer in his hands, Lersner reported to him. Wöhler knew him from his time as chief of staff at Army Group Centre and, in Lersner's own words, had long supported him. No one could therefore be surprised when Lersner, in his report of 7 October 1943, reiterated the troops' demand for 'truthfulness' in military reporting. The fact that this demand was given precedence over 'We need weapons, we need men' was 'the most significant factor when assessing morale'. Added to this, Lersner said, was the fact that 'the sense of superiority over the Russian adversary, which had so far been present in all phases of the Russian campaign, had taken its first knock'. Lersner quoted officers and other ranks saying things like: 'The Russians are more on their toes than we are', or 'they really make total war, while we only talk about it'. These demands did not 'represent any inner revolt, or miserable whingeing, or lack of faith'. Because they had proved their readiness for sacrifice in their defensive battles, the troops were 'protesting with all their might against hushing-up, using euphemisms, or talking in superlatives'. To maintain their inner resilience the troops instead needed a clear picture of the overall situation, and an explanation of the hard

<sup>63</sup> Letter to Army Group South, 10 Sept 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Letter of 15 Sept. 1943, *ibid.* On 8 June 1943 Rosenberg had spoken to Army Group South on 'political objectives in the eastern area' and appealed for cooperation. As a soldier, Manstein had regarded this as a matter of course, since he was 'no more than the executant of the leadership's political will', memo of 10 June 1943, BA-MA RH 20-8/71.

<sup>65</sup> Letter of 15 Sept. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/10.

<sup>66</sup> Letter of 30 Sept. 1943, *ibid.*

and often not understood necessities arising from it. 'Especially in the most difficult situation, when ammunition, weapons, and men were running short', the soldier needs to 'be guided, as well as by command and example, by the right word being said'. It was self-evident that military-ideological guidance 'in times of combat is effective not through lectures or booklets of highly intellectual content, but through simple, sensible talking between officer and man'. That, however, Lersner summed up, can be done by the officer only if he himself has in his hands 'clear, concise material'.<sup>67</sup>

Gen. Wöhler was not satisfied with Keitel's reply. In his letter to Army Group South on 8 October 1943 he was not at all interested in matters of detail, of when or what welfare material had been dispatched or when it had arrived among the troops.<sup>68</sup> Instead he stressed the 'out-of-dateness' of the material the OKH and OKW were providing: 'The 1943 warrior is a different man from the one of 1939! He has long ago realized how bitterly serious the struggle for our nation's existence is. He hates clichés and whitewashing, and wants to be given the facts, and given them "in his own language". Anything that looks like propaganda he instinctively rejects.'<sup>69</sup> As for the ABO to the Eighth Army, Wöhler had to admit that that Capt. von Zwehl had been unsuitable, but also pointed out that the 'personal impact of the welfare officer as an "itinerant preacher"' had, because of the Eighth Army's continuous defensive battles since mid-July 1943 and in view of the extension of the fronts, been 'an illusion'. 'Here, military-ideological guidance is almost exclusively in the hands of the unit commander!'—with the familiar shortcomings arising from the heterogeneous nature of the officer corps of 1943, shortcomings to which Wöhler had drawn attention as early as 10 September.

The 'treatment of key political issues (Jewry, and the struggle against world plutocracy)' was—Wöhler declared on 8 October 1943—of scant interest to a front-line soldier engaged in a full-scale battle, because among the troops these ideological themes all merged together into 'catch-phrase propaganda'. Not everyone was able to discuss them in 'as masterly and ever-fresh a way' as Goebbels was doing every week in the periodical *Das Reich*. Wöhler was no opponent of military-ideological guidance, but he was anxious not to stage 'superficial "patriotic instruction" [like that at the end of the First

<sup>67</sup> Report on a visit to Eighth Army 24 Sept.–5 Oct. 1943, viz. to III and XXXXVII Panzer Corps, XI Army Corps, 3rd Pz. Div., SS-Div. 'Wiking', 198th and 320th Inf. Divs. and 3rd Inf. Regt., initialled by Zeitzler, BA-MA RH 13/50. Similar assessments—'the troops are at the end of their tether, but the Russians even worse'—were reported on 6 Oct. 1943 by Col. Curt Pollex of the general staff, OKH/Gen.Qu., BA-MA N 712/10. Information on morale among Third Panzer Army is provided in a field post censorship report for July–September, dated 27 Oct. 1943, BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 485.

<sup>68</sup> BA-MA RH 13/10.  
<sup>69</sup> Not only the German soldier had changed, but also the country where he had been fighting since 1941. He was asking 'who had got him into this mess', such that people in the Ukraine no longer wanted to know about German soldiers, and indeed acted 'absolutely disloyally, when in 1941 they had welcomed them downright brilliantly'. Submission of Air Fleet 4 to the Reich ministry for the occupied eastern territories, dated 12 Oct. 1943, Sammlung Schumacher/342. See also Lersner's report of 25 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/50.

World War]'. Like Lersner, the commander-in-chief of the Eighth Army wanted 'to arouse the deepest wells of resistance' in his soldiers. To achieve this it was not enough to dispatch a few experts on military-ideological guidance to the front 'to provide suggestions and "train" welfare officers'; what the serious military situation demanded was that they go and talk to the men in the very front lines, 'thus matching what they do to the needs and demands of the soldiers at the front'. Manstein 'fully and totally' endorsed this view, because the chief of the Wehrmacht high command had not, he said, touched upon the 'crucial question', that of adapting propaganda and military-ideological guidance to the demands of 'this present time of crisis'. He therefore proposed that 'leading figures' from the OKW (Wehrmacht propaganda department) and the OKH (army affairs) should regularly visit the troops.

Thus challenged by the commanders in the field, the head of the army affairs department, Col. Albert Radke, made a detailed report to the chief of the general staff on 19 October 1943.<sup>70</sup> Outwardly he did not admit to any blame and played the ball back into the Eighth Army's court, but internally everyone agreed that the structure of military-ideological guidance had to be reinforced, especially in view of the heavy defensive fighting there would be in the winter of 1943/4.<sup>71</sup>

Radke's immediate superior in the army high command, the special-duties Gen. Eugen Müller, believed he could personalize the conflict by putting the blame for the Eighth Army's lack of élan on its chief of staff, Maj.-Gen. Dr Hans Speidel, that 'intellectual, introspective, researching Württemberger, always fond of stressing the negative and missing much that is good'.<sup>72</sup>

However, Gen. Wöhler volleyed the ball straight back at the army high command. By telephone he complained 'most strongly' about the form and content of Radke's reply of 26 October 1943. He was not having himself lectured to or judged by a departmental head. 'Colonel Radke was avoiding the crux of the matter. The essential point was that the eastern front soldier of 1943 was an entirely different person from the one fighting on the eastern front in 1942 or 1941.'<sup>73</sup> After Müller had confirmed that the head of the army affairs department had not been aiming at the real target—even though he himself had previously approved his letter—and Keitel had forbidden any further correspondence on the matter, Radke had to undertake

<sup>70</sup> BA-MA RH 13/v. 47; see also Berghahn, *NSDAP*, 44–5, though with a wrong date.

<sup>71</sup> Notes for report on the state of military-ideological guidance of 20 Oct. 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>72</sup> Müller's memorandum of 20 Oct. 1943, *ibid.* Müller's accusation missed its mark because, for one thing, Speidel had just spent four weeks with the Eighth Army, when its Ic/AO had drafted the first report for Wöhler, dated 10 Sept. 1943, and for another because Speidel had been assessed as outstanding by his direct military superior on 15 Aug. 1943 and 6 Feb. 1944, NA, RG 1027.

<sup>73</sup> Memo of 2 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

an official tour of Army Group South and the Eighth Army.<sup>74</sup> His report, dated 12 November 1943, on this journey to Canossa was kept pointedly matter-of-fact.<sup>75</sup>

Radke, too, now listed the troops' wishes as (1) men, (2) ammunition, and (3) weapons. But already in his second, more general, statement he arrived at a different assessment from Lersner: 'The sense of superiority over the individual Russian soldier persists as before. The troops are particularly pained by the thought that, because of the enemy's material superiority and their own shortage of weapons and ammunition, they have to avoid contact with such a "rabble".'<sup>76</sup> On the positive side, Radke reported that the Wehrmacht communiqué was no longer being criticized because it now made 'allowance for the troops' wishes for presentation of the situation at the front'. He still reported criticism of *Mitteilungen für das Offizierkorps* ('standard too low') and of *Mitteilungen für die Truppe* ('petty schoolmasterly articles [should] if possible [be] avoided'). Moreover, the frequently forced 'front-line soldier tone often diminished the effect'. Radke made no comment on the difference, emphasized by the commands in the field, between first- and second-generation front-line soldiers. His written and verbal reports<sup>77</sup> to the chief of the general staff, Zeitzler, marked the official closure of the 'case' of the Eighth Army and Army Group South. It has been described here in such detail because, beyond the particular case of the Eighth Army, it provides an insight into the discussion between commands in the field and high commands on the content to be given to military-ideological guidance in the war of attrition on several fronts in the late summer and autumn of 1943.<sup>78</sup>

The second major 'orientation course', initiated by the Party and organized by the OKW, was held in Bad Schachen (Lindau) from 11 to 14 October and in Rastenburg on 16 October 1943. This time the commanders-in-chief of the three Wehrmacht services were invited, along with their heads of administration, chief surgeons, and officials for army welfare and military-ideological guidance. Wehrmacht and Party agreed on drawing the attention of military district commanders, commanding admirals, and commanding generals of Air Gau commands to the 'demands of the hour' (Bormann), and to convey

<sup>74</sup> Radke could now demonstrate to the troops whether his superior's assessment of him was correct: 'marked skill for treating political questions, clear eye for the concerns and needs of the troops, adroit in negotiation with other authorities, clear and convincing and at the same time tactful in the presentation and propagation of his views', BA-MA Pers 6/8918 (March 1943).

<sup>75</sup> BA-MA RH 13/v. 42.

<sup>76</sup> For that reason the commanding officer of the 413rd Infantry Regiment published his own news-sheet, designed to give the troops the right 'attitude towards these miserable creatures', entry for 21 Oct. 1943, BA-MA N 712/10. A different tone, more in line with Lersner's assessment, was sounded by Maj. von Rittberg of the general staff (OKH/FHO) in his account of his visit to the front, dated 4 Dec. 1943, countersigned not only by Col. Reinhard Gehlen but also by Zeitzler, BA-MA RH 2/2047.

<sup>77</sup> Report on 13 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/1.

<sup>78</sup> See Gottfried Benn's intellectual critique of military-ideological guidance by OKW/WPr, which he, as a major in the medical corps, had 'followed attentively', Benn, *Gesammelte Werke*, iv. 120ff.



to them 'the major points of view and insights [that are] important for this political guidance' (Keitel).<sup>79</sup>

It would be the task of the high-ranking participants to see to the 'uniform orientation' of the 4 million people (servicemen and civilians) for whom they were responsible. Needless to say, the officer corps ranked in first place, but special attention should also be given to the ideological care for nearly 700,000 wounded in hospitals in Germany. Keitel called on all officers to be 'political soldiers', that is to say 'bearers of the will and confessors of the National Socialist ideology'.<sup>80</sup> The chief of the OKW moreover demanded healthy optimism, unreserved confidence in the leadership, and the fiercest battle against know-alls and carpers. Commanding officers should act most vigorously against defeatism: 'Anything that harms Germany should be ruthlessly destroyed . . . Anyone not fully and totally standing by the Führer breaks his oath of loyalty and becomes a deserter.' Measures recommended by Keitel against 'attitudes detrimental to military morale' were first education and instruction, then warning and punishment, and finally eradication.

The chief of the Wehrmacht high command issued the following key phrases to be used in the new uniform activation of political education and the orientation of those in the home war area: this war would not end with the usual conclusion of peace, nor even with another enforced peace such as Versailles. This war was about victory or destruction, life or annihilation.<sup>81</sup> While everybody wanted victory, there was a lack of 'the will to resist, the will to hold on to the end, to offer the most selfless commitment, to renounce comfort'. This had still to be inculcated.

The officers and officials of all Wehrmacht services were next addressed by prominent figures from the Party, including Goebbels, Himmler, and Rosenberg. While Goebbels did not record in his diary exactly what it was he 'got the top military figures to take to heart',<sup>82</sup> the commander of Air Gau VII (Munich), Zenetti, noted that according to Goebbels the political situation needed to be viewed from a distance and in its entirety, and that among Germany's enemies there was the 'unanimous will for annihilation'. The demand therefore was, as was shown by the historical examples of Rome against Carthage and Frederick the Great in the Seven Years War, for 'profound faith in the Führer and his final victory'.<sup>83</sup> The same note was struck on 13 October

<sup>79</sup> See Bormann's letter to Rosenberg, 18 Sept. 1943, BA NS 8/130.

<sup>80</sup> Gen. Emil Zenetti's report on Keitel's opening address, n.d., BA-MA RL 19/69. The Party of course also had an interest in Wehrmacht and Party 'becoming absolutely as one in their dynamism and political collaboration'.

<sup>81</sup> That these were no empty words is proved by Keitel's order of 12 Dec. 1943, *re* 'preparation for the impending full-scale battles in the west', where it is stated under point C. 13: 'There is no capitulation or retreat . . . Everyone has to fight, and if necessary die, at the place assigned to him,' *KTB OKW*, iii. 1480.

<sup>82</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, xi, 10 and 11 Oct. 1943. 'Few Moltkes among them, more workmen than strategists.' However, Goebbels learned from Reinecke that he had been having great difficulties with the 'military-ideological orientation' of the Wehrmacht, *ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1943.

<sup>83</sup> Notes for the conferences, BA-MA RL 19/69.



by the young (b. 1907) Gauleiter of Southern Westphalia, Albert Hoffmann, who had been commended by Hitler and who called for a 'political Wehrmacht' that 'unambiguously, clearly and uncompromisingly [avowed] the National Socialist ideology'.<sup>84</sup>

As earlier at Sonthofen, Himmler in Bad Schachen again spoke on the 'security situation within the Reich'.<sup>85</sup> Having branded Jewry as the No. 1 ideological enemy of National Socialist Germany and made disparaging remarks about the Slavs, Himmler praised Stalin for giving his people a very thorough political schooling, and leading the Red Army, 'that whole east European and central Asiatic human horde', with the aid of his 'political officers', the commissars. They saw their task in constantly driving their men into battle. In this field, too, the Russians were a 'merciless, ruthless, brutal opponent', from whom one could but learn. The Russians must, by our being 'frighteningly harsh towards ourselves', be met with 'something of our own, something Germanic'.

Thus brought to the idea of a harder ideological line, the commanding officers were, as the crowning conclusion to their conference, given a political stimulus by Hitler himself on 16 October 1943, and moreover at his headquarters in East Prussia. There he also uttered the motto that came to be repeated like a prayer-mill mantra, of 'Here we have the officer, there they have the *politruk*'.<sup>86</sup> Another participant noted: 'We don't want any commissars, but the officers themselves have to be commissars'.<sup>87</sup> The 'professional officer' was no longer enough; what was needed was the 'political officer', leading the men entrusted to him as a 'fanatical champion of our ideology'. National Socialism alone, with its ideological foundations, had found a synthesis for 'saving Germany and Europe from the total annihilation of our values by Bolshevism and Americanism'.<sup>88</sup> The task of military-ideological leadership of the troops—as an instrument of attack in the Aryan race's total war against the 'pan-Jewish will for annihilation'—was defined for the entire officer corps

<sup>84</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 142. The speech was distributed in the Wehrmacht in 1944. On Hitler's praise see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 27 Oct. 1943, and Blank, 'Albert Hoffmann als Reichsverteidigungskommissar', 189–210.

<sup>85</sup> IMT, xxxvii. 499–523 (14 Oct. 1943); see also Lersner's handwritten notes BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. fos. 100–2, as well as an extract repr. in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 191–2. On 19 Oct. 1943 the admiral commanding U-boats, Adm. Hans-Georg von Friedeburg, wrote to Himmler: 'You would not believe how grateful the whole circle of listeners was that you took the time to make your important remarks to this group of officers (to whom, after all, 4 million men are entrusted). There can be no doubt that an energetic and resolute leadership that knows what it wants always makes the deepest impression on the serving man,' BA NS 19/922.

<sup>86</sup> Lersner's notes, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407, BL 103. As early as 9 June 1942 Himmler had told SS officers that the war against the Soviet Union was 'a clash between the Russian commissar and the German officer', Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 150. According to Goebbels, Hitler had stressed that the Bolsheviks were superior to the Nazis in waging the war as a war of ideologies 'because with them the military prowess of the nation and the Bolshevik ideology had become one'. Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 17 Oct. 1943.

<sup>87</sup> Thus Passe in his conference notes of 18 Dec. 1943, BA NS 6/142.

<sup>88</sup> Zenetti's report, BA-MA RL 19/69. Dönitz also took part in this event but unfortunately his report is missing from the BA-MA.

of his command by the army commander Ostland, Braemer (who does not appear to have been present in Bad Schachen or in Rastenburg), as 'the creation of a history-conscious political warrior, whose head and heart are filled with a fanatical devotion to seeing this war through to its victorious conclusion, whatever the cost'.<sup>89</sup>

As he had before in February 1939, so Hitler in the autumn of 1943 demanded of his officers 'ultimate loyalty . . . and above all ultimate personal and political engagement' in the struggle for the goals of National Socialism. The special position, the position of honour that he had given the officer 'within and before the nation', alone placed a duty of gratitude on the officer. Unlike Stalin, he had not 'exterminated the German intelligentsia or those who thought differently', but relied instead on insight and education. Hitler's thoughts had been encapsulated by Himmler in his speech in Bad Schachen in the phrase: 'Honour is compulsion enough.'

However, when the Wehrmacht's unconditional will to victory was at stake, the National Socialist regime did not flinch from taking draconian measures. Anyone undermining the German nation's strength by defeatism had—Hitler impressed on the assembled commanding officers—to be 'brutally annihilated . . . Any means leading to victory is legitimate'.<sup>90</sup> This was no empty threat, as is proven by the decree on 'subversion of fighting morale (malicious speech)', issued by the army personnel office on 5 January 1944. The longer the war continued, the more vigorously did a responsible state leadership have to act against anyone who by his attitude jeopardized or paralysed the German nation's will to fight and resist, thereby making himself 'a tool of our enemies'. 'So long as idealists are being killed in action at the front, any leniency towards a faithless saboteur and traitor to our Führer and his work is out of place. They exclude themselves from the *Volkgemeinschaft*. Every officer should be totally convinced of the need for most severe punishments in the interest of *raison d'état*.'

Commanders in the field and their equivalents had not only to pass on this order to all officers, but in the event of further 'offences of political demoralization' had to examine whether there had been any 'failure by superiors with regard to supervision in the area of National Socialist guidance and ideological education'.<sup>91</sup> Hitler, Himmler, Keitel, and Schmundt were not only concerned with the purely military need to maintain the combat strength of the Wehrmacht, but also wanted to compel every officer 'to recognize the crucial values of our national and political life' and to endorse them with 'convincing strength'. If he failed to do so, he had 'forfeited his suitability as an officer'.<sup>92</sup>

The German officer's double duty as 'bearer of political will within the Wehrmacht' was explained by Hitler in Breslau's Jahrhunderthalle on 20 November 1943, speaking to the youngest intake of officers, the senior ensigns

<sup>89</sup> Order of 30 Oct. 1943, BA-MA RL 4/311.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> OKH/HPA/Ag P2 Chefgr., No. 250, Az21 geh., of 5 Jan. 1944, BA-MA RL 5/793.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

of the Wehrmacht services, and the *Junker* of the Waffen-SS. A soldier's courage and toughness involved not only 'the *credo* of the politically schooled man' who knows what the war is being waged for, but 'in the most bitter hours of trial it [was] also vital that the men called to leadership derive their faith in victory from their ideology, and that they know how to pass on this faith to their followers through their example and attitude'.<sup>93</sup> Ten days earlier Hitler had laid down the personnel policy maxim that only generals who radiated confidence and wholeheartedly endorsed the struggle for the National Socialist ideology should be employed as commanders in the field.<sup>94</sup> The events of 20 July 1944 were to make it starkly evident that not every Wehrmacht officer identified fully with Hitler in his dual role of political and military leader of Germany.

While Hitler, Jodl, Himmler, Berger, and Goebbels strictly rejected the 'Soviet principle', they respected its ideological stringency. Goebbels admitted to his diary that the Wehrmacht lacked 'the National Socialist *politruk*'.<sup>95</sup> The army affairs department, on 20 October 1943, was not yet ready to go quite that far: 'When comparing the officer, as the one responsible for providing political-ideological leadership in the Wehrmacht, with the *politruk*, the Führer was underlining what the task of the officer was.'<sup>96</sup> But this new-old political leadership task—alongside the purely tactical one—was open to a variety of interpretations. While Lersner believed that the foundation of ideological leadership had already been established in the 'type of the young [welfare] officer, militarily proven, ideologically convinced, and wholly devoted', there were also quite different and more far-reaching initiatives and claims to power being made. These cannot be justified solely by the necessities of war, such as the argument that between June and November 1943 there had been a major collapse in the morale of the men on the eastern front. If prior to the Soviet offensive in mid-June 1943 it was being said: 'We have never been stronger than we are now,' then the judgement in early August 1943 was already: 'Something isn't working any longer.' In the autumn, by the beginning of November, morale had visibly deteriorated: 'The eastern front has been written off. Why doesn't anything go right for us any more? Are we even in a position to hold on?'<sup>97</sup> Towards the end of November a front-line officer

<sup>93</sup> Domarus, *Reden*, ii. 2061–2. See the directive of 8 Jan. 1944 in Schmunt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, and 'Handbuch für höhere Adjutanten', 89, BA-MA RHD 23/9. On the impact of Hitler's address on his listeners see Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 20 and 22 Nov. 1943.

<sup>94</sup> Schmunt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 111 (10 Nov. 1943).

<sup>95</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 12 Oct. 1943. At the beginning of July 1942 Goebbels had still vehemently refused to view Bolshevism as an equally tenable *credo*, or to acknowledge 'heroism and bravery' on the Bolshevik side. See his order to the Wehrmacht high command of 13 July 1942, BA-MA RW 4/v. 257.

<sup>96</sup> Lecture memorandum on the state of military-ideological leadership, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407; on political schooling in the Red Army see Pruck, 'Rote Soldat'.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* The officer commanding Fourth Army, on the other hand, judged the morale of his forces as 'good and in general not too affected by events in Italy', BA-MA N 265/157, 6 Aug. 1943.

wrote to Hitler anonymously that the German soldier would take to his heels 'even if the Russians launch an attack with troops that are nothing like the calibre of ours. It is not superior forces that are beating us, it is the spirit of the men—and the demands that are being made on them.'<sup>98</sup> Capt. Hosenfeld (in Warsaw) was even more outspoken in his diary on 17 October 1943:<sup>99</sup> 'There can be no question of a united, unbending popular will . . . and the front senses that. Along thousands and thousands of little conduits the destructive spirit of fatalism flows back and forth between people and those at home, sapping strength there. The cause of our defeats is not the number of men or their equipment, but solely their morale, the lack of fighting spirit. Hitler has led the troops into the Russian wastelands, and now they feel deserted, deceived, and betrayed. That is the deepest cause of our reverses, and it is what is going to lead to collapse.'

Less pessimistic was the assessment by Col. Pollex after a further visit to the eastern front: 'What remains admirable is the impression of enormous hope on the part of the fighting forces with their—where it is found—exemplary leadership.'<sup>100</sup> The degree to which some commanders remained rooted in the struggle against Bolshevism can be seen from the order to the 16th Panzer Division, fighting in Italy, of 23 August 1943. Invoking the heroic battle against the 'Russian assault' in 1942/3 that claimed so many casualties, the troops were called upon to display a tough will for the fight and to stand firm behind Hitler. The British and Americans might be superior to the Wehrmacht in material and aircraft, 'but not in combat morale'.<sup>101</sup> The chief of staff of naval operations, Vice-Adm. Wilhelm Meisel, likewise saw the 'struggle against Bolshevism' as the 'greatest asset' in German politics.<sup>102</sup>

The various initiatives for reforming military-ideological leadership also revealed much older ideological convictions. A significant one was that of Col. Dr Hübner in May 1943. In the judgement of his military superiors 'an enthusiastic National Socialist', this commander of the 529th Grenadier Regiment did not approve of the way ideological schooling had so far been practised in the army. He therefore drafted a memorandum and sent it, through official channels, to the army personnel department.<sup>103</sup> Proceeding from his ideal goal of the 'proud, tough, resolute assault soldier, conscious of his blood and his honour, with the best of training, standing with true Germanic loyalty by his Führer and supreme commander, living in Adolf Hitler's world, and deriving the meaning of his existence and his ultimate spur from a deeply felt Germanic sense of sacrifice for the Germanic-German people', Hübner observed that the army had not so far recognized 'the great character-moulding force of National Socialism'. A uniform ideological orientation was lacking. Of 100

<sup>98</sup> Quoted from *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1022.

<sup>99</sup> Hosenfeld, *'Ich versuche jeden zu retten'*.

<sup>100</sup> Entry for 2 Nov. 1943, BA-MA N 712/10.

<sup>101</sup> Order of the day by Maj.-Gen. Rudolf Sieckenius, BA-MA RH 27-16/8.

<sup>102</sup> Lecture by the naval commander-in-chief in Berlin on 8 June 1943, BA-MA RM 7/1422.

<sup>103</sup> Memo of May 1943, BA NS 19/750.

recruits in his regiment—two of whom had been *Fähnleinführer* in the Hitler Youth—not one had been able to say ‘anything clear and unambiguous’ about National Socialism: very much in contrast to deserters among the Red Army prisoners of war. The German army, too, had to learn that a soldier derived ‘an inner impetus’ from ideological schooling and, in consequence, the ‘moral strength’ of the Wehrmacht would be greatly enhanced. Such schooling, however, would have to be ‘uniform and straightforward’ in order to make the soldier ‘ever harder and more implacable in his objectives’; this would significantly shorten the war. Once Wehrmacht, Party, and SS had become ‘a single, solid block ideologically’, Hübner asked in conclusion, ‘what world could stand up to them?’ In organizational terms he proposed ‘at the top’ the creation of a special ‘authority for ideological schooling in the Wehrmacht (army)’, a kind of intellectual centre, and ‘at the bottom’, at the level of regiments, weapons colleges, courses, and garrison HQs, a suitable, ideologically assured, older officer with no religious affiliations as welfare officer and adviser on ideological schooling to the commanding officer.

In the army personnel office the principles of this memorandum were ‘sincerely welcomed’ by Generals Rudolf Schmundt and Wilhelm Burgdorf.<sup>104</sup> At almost the same time Hübner—while on leave—made contact with the SS towards the end of May 1943 through the SS-owned Nordland-Verlag publishing house in Berlin. He declared himself ready to submit his memorandum to Himmler as well—unofficially, of course. Hübner was firmly resolved to carry what he felt to be the right ideas into the army, ‘even if he had to proceed like a Jesuit’.<sup>105</sup> His first opportunity to do so came when he was one of the speakers on the above-mentioned course for ABOs from 6 to 10 July 1943 in Berlin. His sphere of activity was considerably enlarged with his posting to the army personnel office at the beginning of September 1943. This may not have been the ‘intellectual centre’ he had in mind, but he was entrusted there with drafting a booklet for the ‘ideological orientation of the officer corps’, an idea that Col. Vollrath von Hellermann had submitted to Schmundt in early August 1943. Under the heading of ‘What are we fighting for?’ or ‘Why are we fighting?’, answers were to be supplied to the questions ‘that are crucial to our nation’s struggle of destiny and are therefore being asked, time and again, by officers of all ranks’.<sup>106</sup>

Hübner immediately—and now officially—made contact with the head of the SS Central Office, Berger, asking for his help with the political side of his work. From egotism and vanity Berger initially kept in the background, since his own memorandum on ideological education in the Waffen-SS had still not been authorized by Himmler. No sooner had the booklet ‘What are

<sup>104</sup> Hübner to Dr Mischke of Amt VII, SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt, letter of 15 July 1943, *ibid.*; on Mischke as a person see Naasner, *SS-Wirtschaft*, 347–8. On 7 Jan. 1943 Schmundt had already urged in Keitel to extend the scope of military-ideological guidance to that of ‘National Socialist orientation’, Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 36.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 135 (2 Aug. 1943).

we fighting for?’ assumed shape than Hübner again approached Berger. The fact that Gen. Schmundt had received it ‘with greatest approval’ and would ‘shortly’ submit it to Hitler was evidently not enough for him. Nor was Hübner satisfied with drafting a mere order on the use to be made of his booklet; he wanted a ‘Führer order’ making it obligatory for all officers ‘emphatically to implant the Germanic ideology of our National Socialism . . . in every soldier . . . and do so uncompromisingly’.<sup>107</sup>

Hübner was anxious to break through ‘the opaque, vacuous “military-ideological” front, that is not borne up by any revolutionary impetus’. Through Berger he asked Himmler to obtain the necessary order from Hitler, for which he would write a draft from his ‘deep faith in the greatness of our National Socialist world’. ‘At a decisive hour there is a need for action and vigorous attack’ to ensure that the officer corps becomes an order, one forming an ‘idea-sharing block’ with the leaders’ corps of the SS. Berger considered this letter so important that he made every effort to see that Himmler received it even before his lecture to the commanding officers back at home ‘in Bartschacken’.<sup>108</sup> After Hitler, too, had ‘received Hübner’s text with the greatest approval’, and when, equipped with his Führer order, Hübner was to have it distributed among the army officer corps in some 300,000 copies, he was jubilant: ‘With the goal of my life, that I set myself with fanatical unassailable determination, to help the magnificent Germanic ideology of our great Führer to make its breakthrough, wherever I could, I have advanced by a good step. The “military-ideological” front will be penetrated. The spirit of a Horst Wessel and the heroes of 9 November 1923 will now be marching with the army, accompanying our armies in their titanic struggle! Now victory can no longer be snatched from us.’<sup>109</sup> Without awaiting the ‘Führer word’,<sup>110</sup> ‘his’ text was released for the press on 20 December 1943, under the title *Für was kämpfen wir?* [What are we Fighting For?]. It was to provide a signpost for the officer for his own ideological orientation and the ‘intellectual equipment’ for the political educating and training of his men. What Schmundt called the final ‘drill manual’ for the political-ideological education of the Wehrmacht, which appeared in the spring of 1944, was prefaced by an ‘Order from the Führer’ dated 8 January, which was not identical with Hitler’s earlier order for ‘National Socialist leadership in the Wehrmacht’.<sup>111</sup> The former was more a continuation of the road Keitel had mapped out for the army in his order of 1 June 1942.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Confidential letter from Hübner to Berger, 1 Oct. 1943, BA NS 19/750.

<sup>108</sup> Letters from Berger to Himmler and to his personal assistant Dr Rudolf Brandt, 10 Oct. 1943, both initialled by Himmler, *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Hübner to Berger, 13 Oct. 1943, BA NS 19/750. His next goal was for the officers ‘truly to become a corps, an order’. Mischke himself was convinced ‘that hardly anything in education will be changed by writing books’. Letter to Brandt of 27 Oct. 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> HPA conference, 20 Dec. 1943, BA-MA H 11/56b.

<sup>111</sup> 22 Dec. 1943, repr. in Besson, ‘Geschichte des NSFOs’, doc. 5; see Ch. VII of this section.

<sup>112</sup> Besson, *Geschichte des NSFOs*, doc. 1, and Führer-Erlasse, 383–4; see Ch. V of this section.



Restating his guideline of 19 December 1941—‘unconditional agreement between state leadership and officer corps’—Hitler defined the officer as the bearer of the political will of his nation. In the crucial ‘struggle between two totally opposed ideologies’ the most valuable forces would ‘wither if one tried to base the army’s mental combat strength merely upon blind obedience instead of on a resolve that recognizes the “whence” and the “wherefore”’. Hitler called on his officers to be also ideological pioneers, and to educate their men to be ‘convinced and insuperable warriors for our great Teutonic German Reich in line with our National Socialist ideology. He who succeeds in pouring into the struggle the purest will, the bravest faith, and the most fanatical resolve will win final victory.’ Although the starting point for this ‘Führer order’ was in the army, with Col. Hübner, his *What are we Fighting For?* was so generally aimed against Jewry, Bolshevism, Britain, and America that it was used officially by National Socialist political-education officers (NSFOs) in the navy and Luftwaffe too, as well as being used by officers for private study.

The Luftwaffe was still having difficulties in the autumn of 1943 with the various tasks of military welfare. The chief of Dept. VIII (military science) of the Luftwaffe general staff, Maj.-Gen. Herhudt von Rohden, therefore proposed the creation of a special, ‘military-ideological guidance’ department for the ideological orientation of the heterogeneous Luftwaffe officer corps—this time directly under the chief of the general staff. Rohden believed that in the Luftwaffe there was virtually no ‘practical military-ideological guidance attuned to the inner feelings of the men’. While he regarded Lersner’s work in the army as excellent, he reported to his superiors that in the Luftwaffe he had ‘unfortunately . . . so far encountered only fools who, voluntarily or otherwise, were dealing with military-ideological guidance. Such people, of course, will never achieve what is needed and what can in fact be achieved.’<sup>113</sup>

Within his own department Rhoden set a good example: not just as a duty but of his own accord he regularly kept his staff up to date with the situation, and moreover passed on to them ‘what the military and state leadership were thinking’.<sup>114</sup> This they should, in their letters, share with those at home and, much more importantly, at the front. The chief of Air Fleet 2, Field Marshal von Richthofen, had a poor opinion of his military welfare officer: ‘Maj. [Hans] Dietrich talks all kinds of nonsense and merely seeks to prove that he is a poet and a writer. He wants me to read what he has produced ever since the start of the war.’<sup>115</sup> This assessment did not prevent Rohden from putting Dietrich in charge of ‘ideological warfare’ in Dept. VIII.

The commander of Air Gau VII (Munich) chose a different approach. Gen. Zenetti took to heart what Hitler and Keitel had said about the German officer corps at the commanding officers’ conference, and gave orders

<sup>113</sup> Letter to Chef GenStdLw, Gen. Günther Korten, 22 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RL 2 IV/66.

<sup>114</sup> Address of 22 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RL 2 IV/65.

<sup>115</sup> Richthofen’s diary, entry for 7 Sept. 1943, BA-MA N 671/11.



for the 'uniform political orientation' of the troops and civilian employees. The task of military-ideological leadership, 'as *political warfare*', from now on '[had] equal standing with *tactical warfare*'.<sup>116</sup> Its aim and purpose were keeping up of the fighting zest of the troops and stiffening their will to resist. Zenetti expected every officer under his command to clearly understand 'that the national, ethnic, social, and cultural programme of the National Socialist movement is the only possible foundation for our ideological orientation', and that this programme 'also defined our worthy and just war aim'. He would not tolerate man management not being aligned with the meaning of the present ideological struggle, or his commanding officers, battalion, unit, or platoon commanders failing 'inwardly to endorse these aims and purposes'.<sup>117</sup> The fact that on 15 March 1944 Göring entrusted the Luftwaffe personnel chief, Gen. Bruno Loerzer, 'with the implementation of the tasks of National Socialist guidance and education as part of man management' was probably due less to the initiative of the head of Dept. VIII than to Hitler's order of 22 December 1943.<sup>118</sup>

While the army had long been practising 'military-ideological guidance', and while the Luftwaffe understood its own concept of 'military welfare' also as 'military-ideological guidance', the navy was in the spring of 1943 still talking of 'spiritual guidance'. At a further officers' course held in Mürwik from 5 to 10 April 1944 the term 'military guidance' was however, for the first time, used as a synonym for 'spiritual guidance'. The official in charge at the navy high command (OKM), Commander Frühling, believed that this was 'more accurate, as it was all about awakening the strengths of the highly efficient German servicemen.'<sup>119</sup> However, the navy was not concerned with just 'awakening'; the aim of spiritual guidance in total war was to ensure 'that every single man has the will to fight, out of the innermost personal conviction and innermost personal motivation'. He was to be not only a 'bearer of arms', but also 'bearing responsibility for fulfilling Germany's task' and devoted to 'the struggle, however long the war may last'.

Frühling was realistic enough to admit that there was some way to go between the actual situation in the Kriegsmarine and reaching that goal. He did not blame this on the men, 'many of whom [viewed] the events of the war with total indifference'. Instead he asked: 'Are we [officers] ourselves, all of us, at a point where we can really confront the forceful, skilful, and continuous psychological influences of our opponents with a solid and clearly formulated content?' Self-critically, the man responsible for the ideological guidance of

<sup>116</sup> Order of 30 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RL 19/69. See also Zenetti's order of 3 Jan. 1944 that, as part of military-ideological leadership, lectures should be given for commanding officers, staffs, unit commanders, and occasionally also for NCOs and other ranks, *ibid*.

<sup>117</sup> Addenda for all officers and commanders, *ibid*.

<sup>118</sup> BA-MA RL 3/51; see Boog, *Die deutsche Luftwaffenführung*, 290.

<sup>119</sup> Lecture, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. On 15 Apr. 1943 an 'instruction staff for military welfare' was also set up in the navy high command; this was to be responsible for the further education of officers and officer candidates, as well as of military welfare auxiliaries, BA-MA RM 8/65.

the navy at once answered his own question. Many of the men, their families and friends, he said, were burdened by their daily worries. Although they had 'quite dutifully in their minds' adjusted to the war, 'their soul is still [living] somewhere in the days of bourgeois peace'. They would understand total war merely as a 'kind of trial of fate', but not as 'part of the task placed upon us and our nation in this life, one which reflects the very meaning of our entire life'.

Organizationally, too, Frühling had to admit that compared to the Soviet high seas fleet the German navy was lagging far behind, since a quarter of all the Soviet officers were commissars, and thus 'to the highest degree political, and trained in man management'. As spiritual guidance in total war, one of the tasks critical for winning it, had scarcely been tackled, Frühling wanted to see a start made with the new officer entrants. He appealed to those on the course to take their task seriously and tackle it with enthusiasm. They should educate the officer candidates to be aware of carrying responsibility for completing the German task in the war. 'See to it that, among your cadets too, top place is always held by the will to convert into action what they know to be right.' For—Frühling was borrowing from Warzecha's address in February 1942—the more lively the ideological guidance and the more understanding the disciplinary punishment, the less need there would be for 'the drastic remedy of the court martial'.

After one U-boat commander in the spring of 1943 failed to display the required unyielding will in combat to the point of 'honourable sinking' when, after using up all his ammunition, he failed to scuttle his vessel with the flag flying but instead waved a white towel, the navy commander-in-chief gave orders for 'educating officers with implacable hardness to the idea that the honour of the flag ranks higher than the lives of individuals'.<sup>120</sup> As early as 20 March 1943 Dönitz, at the suggestion of the chief of the navy operations staff, had issued an 'inspiring order' to the men in coastal defence. In order to 'prepare a bloody reception' for the Anglo-American enemies when they attempted to break into German-occupied Europe, the navy commander-in-chief expected his men to draw 'with the utmost hardness and resolve the ultimate from their weapons and their own strength'.<sup>121</sup> A good insight into 'ideological leadership' at the navy's lower command level is provided by two reports from the commander of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla in Brest, Capt. Hans Erdmenger. He was anxious, first of all, to make the 'meaning of our hour of need' clear to his men. Secondly, this Knight's Cross holder wanted to strengthen his crews' will to resist and hold on in the 'struggle with the western powers, Bolshevism, and Jewry', as well as to uphold 'manners and

<sup>120</sup> Order of 17 June 1943; BA-MA RM 7/98; see Dönitz's order of 5 Feb. 1943, Salewski, *Von Raeder zu Dönitz*, 145–6, and Werner Rahn in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, x (still to be published).

<sup>121</sup> Quoted from Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, ii. 414 n. 53; see *KTB SKL*, pt. A, iv. 393 (20 Mar. 1943).

morality' against the sensual 'French view of life', 'soullessness', and 'creeping Americanism'. Unfortunately, war conditions were preventing the best kind of military welfare, that is to say 'frequent leave, good postal communications, good food, and the most frequent possible engagement in battle'.<sup>122</sup>

Needless to say, the navy had been represented, with both speakers and participants, at the OKW's central 'orientation courses' in Sonthofen and Bad Schachen. It had also approached the SS for its ideological teaching material. When Lt.-Commander Dr Ruttke of the *Marineabwehramt* let it be known that he intended to send out *SS-Leithefte* [SS Guidance Brochures] and *Germanische Leithefte* [Germanic Guidance Brochures] only to independent commanders, SS-Obergruppenführer Berger remarked laconically that such caution was out of place since more than 20,000 servicemen of all naval ranks were already reading these publications.<sup>123</sup>

Grand Adm. Dönitz, who was still enthusiastic about Hitler's 'enormous strength, unflinching confidence, [and] prescient assessment of the situation in Italy',<sup>124</sup> on 8 September 1943 made it clear how seriously he was taking the task of military-ideological leadership of the forces. After all, they were to defend 'Fortress Europe'. The basis for firm and unified conviction among the men was, he said, the National Socialist ideology. This provided the navy with a firm war aim. It was the task of military-ideological leadership to 'rid our troops of all and every doubt, and instil in them an inner attitude that makes every single serviceman an exponent of resistance and the will to victory, not only within his unit but with regard to those in the homeland as well'. The serviceman should 'be confident that our just cause is, in itself, so strong that in spite of all imaginable reverses it will ultimately be victorious'.<sup>125</sup> After a depressing visit to the Hamburg shipyards Dönitz had explained to Hitler on 19 August 1943 his view that the naval officer had the dual task of radiating strength into his men *and* into the nation; he appealed to Hitler to address 'the people' soon.<sup>126</sup> Because of this attitude and his order 'for the ideological orientation of naval personnel', Dönitz enjoyed great respect not only from Hitler but also from Goebbels, who judged him to be 'one of the most capable leading officers [and] a man who, as a National Socialist and fighter, makes an extremely good impression'.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Annexe P 242 to the war diary of the flotilla for 1–31 Aug. 1943, as well as disciplinary report for the period 1 July 1942–1 Sept 1943, BA-MA RM 58/39. I owe this source to my friend Sönke Neitzel. The fact that Erdmenger's views were not unique is proved by the 'full agreement' of his superior, Adm. Theodor Krancke.

<sup>123</sup> Berger's letter to Himmler, 24 June 1943, BA NS 19/3864. These brochures do in fact appear in the list of texts for military-ideological guidance distributed by the OKM in October 1943, which had not yet been the case in May 1943, BA-MA RM 8/1733.

<sup>124</sup> *Lagevorträge des Oberbefehlshabers der Kriegsmarine*, 541.

<sup>125</sup> BA-MA RM 8/1769; see also Dönitz's order of 5 Oct. 1943 on the celebration of 9 Nov. [1923], BA-MA RM 8/1732.

<sup>126</sup> *Lagevorträge des Oberbefehlshabers der Kriegsmarine*, 541.

<sup>127</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 27 Oct. 1943.

On the organizational side, Dönitz gave orders on 8 September 1943 not only for an intensified schooling of the officer corps by means of conferences, courses, and political lectures, but also the establishment of a 'central staff for political leadership' within the high command. The first head of this department, in October 1943, was Rear-Adm. Friedrich Hüffmeier, commanding officer of the *Scharnhorst* and, in Dönitz's judgement, an 'energetic personality'. On 1 November 1943 the navy high command issued its first directive on 'military-ideological leadership' for unit commanders.<sup>128</sup> Needless to say, responsibility for the education and attitude of the officer corps and the men remained fully with the commanders in the field. The commanding officers' conference on military-ideological leadership, announced by Dönitz in his basic order of 8 September 1943, took place in Weimar in mid-December.<sup>129</sup> According to Salewski the navy high command was anxious 'ideologically to orient the commanding officers in the navy in good time for the tasks expected' in the fifth year of the war.<sup>130</sup> The kind of help that the new guidance staff might give and what ideas there were about the practical implementation were reported on in Weimar by Rear-Adm. Hüffmeier.<sup>131</sup> Not by chance, one of the speakers at this commanding officers' conference was a highly decorated young front-line officer who spoke on 'questions of man management under the special conditions of engagement'.

Wolfgang Lüth, commander of U-181 to whom Hitler on 25 October 1943 had awarded the Diamonds to the Knight's Cross, was proud that all officers, except for one junior, had shown an exemplary attitude and had helped to shape life on board (over 203 days) so 'that every day was a Sunday'. Admittedly, he had not permitted the picture of a girl from a chocolate box, which they had bought in Paris, to be put up in the mess next to the Führer's picture, nor Anglo-American jazz to be listened to: 'Whether you like it or not', he had explained to his officers, 'is not up for discussion. You quite simply are not to like it. Any more than a German man should like a Jewess. For in a hard war everyone must have learned to hate his enemy unreservedly.'<sup>132</sup> Because

<sup>128</sup> BA-MA RM 22/32; see BA-MA RM 8/65. The head of the army affairs department saw the navy's efforts in the military-ideological field as a copy of what the OKH had been doing, see Radke's report to Keitel on 25 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/1.

<sup>129</sup> From 14–17 Dec. 1943, KTB SKL, pt. A, lii. 263 (16 Dec. 1943). The conference announced on 27 Oct. 1943 was originally to be held in Berlin 30 Nov.–3 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RM 8/1769.

<sup>130</sup> Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, ii. 333. The real purpose of the conference, i.e. the ideological schooling of the navy, is not discussed by Salewski.

<sup>131</sup> His lecture was distributed to the unit commanders in June 1944, as well as in the OKM down to departmental heads, BA-MA RM 8/66.

<sup>132</sup> Copy of the lecture that, in the opinion of the head of Dept. I of the Luftwaffe general staff, Col. Christian, 'contained useful hints for the Luftwaffe as well', BA-MA RL 2 III/176, 5 July 1944. Goebbels, too, had a meeting with Lüth: 'From what he says it can be concluded that he made a brilliant job dealing with this [crew leadership]', Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 27 Oct. 1943. On the personality of Lüth and his abilities as a tactical and spiritual leader of his men see Vause, *U-Boat Ace*, and Mulligan, *Neither Sharks nor Wolves*, 185–6.

his men had to know what they were fighting for and for what they were 'consciously and gladly' staking their lives, he sometimes surfaced on a Sunday and gave a talk about 'race and other population policy issues, always from the angle of the struggle for the realization of the Reich'. The other officers also took part in political instruction on board; they had all talked to the crew 'about Germany, the Führer, and his National Socialist movement'.

Because Himmler's lecture in Bad Schachen had evidently met with a positive response from the navy, the Reich leader SS was invited to Weimar. There, on 16 December 1943, he spoke not only about the structure, organization, and ideological schooling of the SS, but also about the 'primitive, primordial race struggle' against 'subhumanity'. The command not to let it grow big was not 'given' or indeed 'simply implemented' in the way it has been 'properly and logically thought through and expressed to you'. Did his listeners, hearing this, think of the murder of the European Jews?<sup>133</sup>

In his concluding address on 17 December 1943 Dönitz, who had heard Hitler's speech at the end of the commanding officers' conference on 16 October 1943, showed himself a 'strong supporter of the idea of ideological schooling' for servicemen.<sup>134</sup> But it was not enough for them to discharge simply their matter-of-course duty—it was necessary 'to educate the serviceman uniformly, comprehensively, so that he is ideologically in tune with our Germany'. Beyond doing his duty there must be 'his conviction, his ideology'; because 'we can assert ourselves in this struggle only if we bring to it our sacred seriousness, our entire fanaticism'. This must apply to the navy, too, in the event of an invasion. Precisely because the naval officers, especially in the U-boat service, are getting younger and younger it was, he said, all the more necessary thoroughly to train the men, and especially the officer cadets, in tactics and 'ideologically to weld them together in spirit, to school them, so as to give them the strength better to cope with their combat tasks . . . Man management is the most important thing.' In conclusion Dönitz once more urged his officers to help him in dealing with the big tasks, and to 'master their educational duties with sacred seriousness'. However, this did not overcome 'the crisis in morale'.<sup>135</sup> At the conference of commanders-in-chief at Dönitz's 'Koralle' headquarters at Bernau, north of Berlin, on 15 February 1944 the navy's commander-in-chief once more emphasized this point. It was the duty of officers to be guardians of the 'vast, firm, close-knit unity of our people

<sup>133</sup> Text of the speech in NA, T 175, roll 91, frames 261 3339ff. I owe this reference to my friend Timothy Mulligan, Washington. See also an excerpt from it in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 201. This is not, however, identical with the above source; see Mulligan, *Neither Sharks nor Wolves*, 230–1.

<sup>134</sup> BA-MA RM 7/98, repr. in *IMT*, xxxv. 106–16; see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 476 ff. On Dönitz's role in the National Socialist system see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 27 Oct. 1943; Salewski, *Das maritime Dritte Reich*, 125 ff., and Werner Rahn in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, x (still to be published).

<sup>135</sup> See Mulligan, *Neither Sharks nor Wolves*, 188 ff.

[and] our National Socialist state'. The young intake of officers, too, must be educated in this spirit.<sup>136</sup>

Hitler and the Party were attempting, with the help of 'political soldiers', to overturn the laws of a war of attrition through fanaticism and faith. The Wehrmacht's commitment to National Socialist ideology became, in the autumn of 1943, a tactical weapon in the defence against a superior enemy, for there must never be 'a Europe under the heel of American Jews or Bolshevik commissars'. 'The strength of the revolutionary [National Socialist] vision enables our valiant troops, even when in defence or a planned withdrawal, to accomplish results that the Russian has, at his utmost, been able to achieve.'<sup>137</sup>

The political-ideological orientation of the Wehrmacht was just *one* of the 'preparations for the decisive battles expected in the west' and in the east that were to be made 'with maximum effort' by all service departments in the time still available.<sup>138</sup> Although the army commanders discovered shortcomings everywhere, they were still 'cheerfully confident' of tackling the tasks entrusted to them. Because 'the most cheering aspect of all is and remains the German soldier, old or young, who won't let anything get him down that easily'.<sup>139</sup> To arm him against the effects of 'Jewish-Bolshevik propaganda'(in which he included the National Committee for a 'Free Germany'), the commander of the 246th Infantry Division at the same time advised that the 'decent German soldier . . . be imbued with an endlessly deep hatred and will to annihilate'. If that was done, no one need any longer fear for the future of our National Socialist Reich. 'The Reich must then surely endure for us!'<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> *IMT*, xxxv. 42–4. A similar comment had previously been made also by the chief of the navy operations staff, Vice-Adm. Wilhelm Meisel. See also the order of 9 Sept. 1943, repr. in Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, ii. 446.

<sup>137</sup> Col.-Gen. Jodl in his address to the NSDAP Reich-and Gauleiters on 7 Nov. 1943, BA NS 69/17; see Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, x, 8 Nov. 1943.

<sup>138</sup> See Hitler's directive No. 51 of 3 Nov. 1943, in *Hitler's War Directives*, 149; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii and viii (still to be published).

<sup>139</sup> Thus Col.-Gen. Hans von Salmuth, commanding the Fifteenth Army, in a personal letter to Jodl on 26 Oct. 1943, NOKW-2533.

<sup>140</sup> Directive of 31 Oct. 1943, sgd. Col. Wilhelm Falley, NOKW-2436. This was the division's reaction to the special issue of *MfdO* of Oct. 1943, repr. in Ueberschär, 'Das NKFD', 269 ff.



## VII. The 'Führer Order' of 22 December 1943

ON 22 December 1943 Hitler gave orders for establishing a leadership staff for 'National Socialist guidance in the Wehrmacht'.<sup>1</sup> This decision in favour of taking a tougher ideological line in 1944 was connected with two well-known strategic directives by Hitler – the shift of the centre of gravity of operations from east to west (3 Nov. 1943), and the restoration of the 'combat strength of the fighting front' (27 Nov. 1943).<sup>2</sup> While the latter directive was unanimously welcomed by the troop commanders, the former met with massive criticism from the generals fighting the Red Army.<sup>3</sup> With replacements now going predominantly to the west and south-west, creating a continuous line of resistance on the eastern front was no longer possible. The declining strength moreover accelerated the rate of 'fighting in reverse gear'.<sup>4</sup> In this situation the weapon of 'ideology' was to help in standing up to the war of attrition longer. The political and supreme military leadership had destroyed 'all bridges' behind it and displayed confidence in a 'defensive victory' over the western Allies in north-west France, 'because the [German] soldier threatened by the annihilation of his homeland fights better and dies more readily' than his opponent.<sup>5</sup>

The subsequent assessment of the 'Führer order' of 22 December 1943 by the Party chancellery as a 'revolutionary act'<sup>6</sup> seems, upon closer inspection, just as inappropriate as the interpretation put forward after 1945 that it marked the overpowering of the Wehrmacht by the Party. The real significance of the order of 22 December 1943 is not so much its contents as the centralization and activization of the Wehrmacht's past political and ideological efforts under a *single* National Socialist guidance staff answering directly to Hitler.<sup>7</sup> He appointed Gen. Hermann Reinecke, the chief of the General Wehrmacht Office (AWA), to head this 'OKW NS Leadership Staff'. He was

<sup>1</sup> Repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 5, *Führer-Erlasse*, 381–2.

<sup>2</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II and vii.

<sup>3</sup> Chef WFSt tried to counteract this 'corroding poison', meaning military criticism, by explaining to all the army groups the 'harsh compulsion' faced by the supreme leadership. The 'strategic survey' of 13 Apr. 1944, signed by Jodl, BA-MA RW 4/v. 876, is repr. in Jung, *Die Ardennen-Offensive 1944/45*, 270ff.

<sup>4</sup> Model on 27 Jan. 1944; see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1019–21, 1067–8.

<sup>5</sup> Jodl addressing the Reich cabinet on 5 May 1944, BA-MA N 69/18. This was put in a different way by Schörner on 20 Jan. 1945: 'Each day shows more clearly that this war cannot be won by tactical measures alone. The closer we get to our native soil, the more powerfully must the moral forces of faith, loyalty, and holy fanaticism emerge'; BA-MA RH 19 VI/33.

<sup>6</sup> Memo of 20 Dec 1944 *re* one year of National Socialist guidance in the Wehrmacht, BA NS 6/782.

<sup>7</sup> See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 448, and the lecture of the Sixth Army chief of staff to the NSFOs on 17 May 1944, BA-MA RH 20–6/398.



authorized to exert direct influence on the hitherto autonomous Wehrmacht services, via their own 'NS Leadership Staffs'. Moreover, it was his duty to to 'report directly' on his work to the commanders-in-chief of the Luftwaffe and navy. However, Reinecke's right of direct access to the Wehrmacht supreme commander was rather theoretical. Although, with the intensified *uniform* political and ideological orientation of the Wehrmacht that had been ordered, he was obliged to 'establish agreement with the NSDAP as the exponent of the political will' of the nation, this wording by no means concealed a triumph of the Party over the Wehrmacht, but rather a toughly contested victory by Bormann over Rosenberg. Rosenberg had for many years fought to attain sole responsibility for the ideological schooling of the Wehrmacht. Now he had to suffer Bormann telling him that the 'working agreement' between him and Keitel of 9 November 1940 was a mere scrap of paper.<sup>8</sup> As for the objective of ensuring 'a uniform ideological concept in the entire officer corps and hence in the entire Wehrmacht' agreed on at that time, Hitler now declared himself responsible for it. However, on the Party side he no longer used the 'Rosenberg office' but instead the Party chancellery under Bormann, where a 'Working Staff for NS Guidance Issues within the Wehrmacht' (headed by Willi Ruder) was set up.<sup>9</sup>

But Rosenberg did not give in easily, and compelled Bormann to obtain from Hitler, as Party leader, a precise definition of his brief, which he himself had ordered to be drafted.<sup>10</sup> The head of the Party chancellery was now, once and for all, 'solely responsible and liable' for the 'mandatory concept of the NSDAP' where the Wehrmacht was concerned. Like Bormann, Reinecke too rejoiced at his freedom of action,<sup>11</sup> and got down to his new task 'with enthusiasm'.<sup>12</sup> On 7 January 1944 the 'Chef NSF/OKW' had an opportunity to present himself and his plans to Hitler personally.

Hitler's real intention with his order of 22 December 1943 emerges from his explanation to a circle of intimates on 7 January 1944.<sup>13</sup> His ultimate objective, he explained, had been the 'complete unification and *slow* penetration of the *entire* Wehrmacht with the National Socialist body of ideas', so that *all* servicemen should have 'a totally *identical* conceptual world'. This intensive, *uniform* political-ideological 'massaging' of the Wehrmacht, for which Hitler had no great hopes in the short run, he assigned as a 'special task' to the

<sup>8</sup> See Bormann's telex and letter to Rosenberg of 22 Jan. and 24 Feb. 1944, BA NS 8/190; on the working agreement see Ch. III of this section.

<sup>9</sup> See *Akten der Parteikanzlei*, 193-4.

<sup>10</sup> Order 9/44 of 19 June 1944, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 9. On the genesis of this order see the draft 23 Apr. 1944 by Ruder, who had to defend his working staff against Passe's objections, BA NS 6/151. Not until 20 Sept. 1944 did Keitel inform the Wehrmacht of Rosenberg's release from these duties, BA NS 8/174.

<sup>11</sup> Reinecke to Rosenberg, 14 Jan. 1944. See Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 112 n. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Keitel in his assessment of 31 Mar. 1944, BA-MA Pers 6/2484, and NOKW-141.

<sup>13</sup> Conference with Gen. Reinecke, attended also by Keitel, Schmundt, and Walter Scherff, as well as by Hitler's army adjutant Borgmann, repr. in Weinberg, 'Adolf Hitler und der NS-Führungsoffizier', 445 ff. (emphasis added). See Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 1, xi, 25 Jan. 1944.

Wehrmacht itself, not to the Party.<sup>14</sup> The OKH's army affairs department also understood the 'Führer order' in this way—as an opportunity for the Wehrmacht to become politically even stronger, thereby enhancing its power 'from within itself'.<sup>15</sup> The Party, for its part, saw its task as 'contributing everything to implement the Führer's will, to create a National Socialist revolutionary army that was equal to any adversary, solid in the inner National Socialist attitude of its officers and men, and with the inflexible determination to achieve victory for the Führer and the Reich'.<sup>16</sup>

Shaping political will in the Wehrmacht—and on this both 'pillars' of the Third Reich were agreed—was the task of the Wehrmacht, albeit on the basis of National Socialism. Of course the organizational cooperation between NSDAP and Wehrmacht meant an increase of Party influence on the fighting forces of National Socialist Germany. However, the army affairs department was not entirely mistaken in its assessment that the establishment of the National Socialist political education officers represented no *essential* interference, since military-ideological guidance had 'from the outset been directed towards ideology'.<sup>17</sup> Both Wehrmacht and Party were anxious to avoid any similarity between the NSFO and the Soviet commissar, even though the political work done in the Red Army impressed them both.<sup>18</sup> Hitler's clarifications on this point at the commanding officers' conference at Bad Schachen/Rastenburg of 16 October 1943 were put differently by Schmudt, the head of the army personnel department, to the effect that in the Wehrmacht the commanding officer was the commissar.<sup>19</sup> The Party meanwhile tried to turn active officers into NSFOs, 'to avoid the impression among the troops that these were "people coming from outside" (commissars) instead of people who were themselves part of the National Socialist Wehrmacht'.<sup>20</sup>

The NSFOs were far from being introduced in the Wehrmacht only after Hitler's order of 22 December 1943. This had been done in the army four weeks earlier, when the 'officers for military-ideological guidance' were renamed 'officers for National Socialist guidance'.<sup>21</sup> The top command, the replacement army, and the forces were already implementing Hitler's directive on this of 28 November 1943 even before the organizing and selection of personnel for the work were regulated centrally. Thus a meeting of what had up to then been 'officers for military-ideological guidance' from the various armies—from

<sup>14</sup> Bormann's letter to Rosenberg of 24 Feb. 1944, BA NS 8/190.

<sup>15</sup> Memo *re* National Socialist guidance, 8 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RW 6/407.

<sup>16</sup> Ruder memo of 30 Dec 1943, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Memo of 8 Dec. 1943 (emphasis added), BA-MA RW 6/407. This in contradiction to Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> See Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt 2, xi, 15 Mar. 1944.

<sup>19</sup> Weinberg, 'Adolf Hitler und der NS-Führungsoffizier', 448.

<sup>20</sup> Ruder memo of 30 Dec. 1943, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 10.

<sup>21</sup> See Radke's report to the chief of the army general staff on 26 Nov. 1943 and the OKH order of 28 Nov. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/1 and RH 21-3/v. 497. The OKW periodical for the officer corps *Was uns bewegt* [What Moves Us] was renamed *Offiziere des Führers* [Officers of the Führer], while other information sheets such as *Unterlagen zur wehrgeistigen Führung der Truppe* [Material for the Military-ideological Guidance of the Troops] were brought into line with 'National Socialist guidance'.

the east, north, and south-east—was held at the OKH headquarters in Zosen under the new title.<sup>22</sup> The commander of military district VII (Munich), Gen. Karl Kriebel, on 9 December 1943 issued a *Fibel für den nationalsozialistischen Führungsunterricht* [Primer for Instruction in National Socialist Guidance]. In it he defined National Socialist guidance as 'spiritual weapons training', emphasizing the obligation that Hitler had placed on the officers. 'Imbuing the men with knowledge, will, and attitude' was just as important as leading them tactically. What the men were supposed to know about the causes of the 'Second World War', as well as about the 'racial issue and practical racial policy', was taught to them in the form of 'question-and-answer' quiz games.<sup>23</sup> On 5 December 1943 Maj.-Gen. Otto Heidkämpfer, chief of staff of the Third Panzer Army, stressed the 'great responsibility' that the former 'officers for military-ideological guidance' now had. 'More than ever before, the guideline for their work is the clear realization that the ideas of National Socialism form the basic foundation for the victory of our weapons.'<sup>24</sup> He also pointed out to the corps and divisions under his command that 'importance is attached in the highest quarters to good staffing in this important area of work'.<sup>25</sup>

In mid-December 1943 an 'introduction of officers to the task of National Socialist guidance' was held in Belgrade. 'Proceeding from the great importance of the commissar in the Russian army', the commander of the Second Panzer Army, Rendulic, emphasized that the right mental attitude to the struggle was achieved only if every German soldier was educated to be a National Socialist. This education should really be conducted by the unit commanders, but these, like the battalion and regimental commanders, were 'even today mostly unable to educate their men in this spirit'. That was why the primary task of the newly trained NSFOs was 'to educate the company commanders of their division to make them into true National Socialists'.<sup>26</sup>

Lersner, since 1 November a lieutenant-colonel, reported from among the troops that 'the renaming of the former military-ideological guidance into National Socialist guidance' was being 'much discussed as a clear expression of the Führer's will'.<sup>27</sup> Receptiveness and a hunger for ideological guidance had also been evident during this visit to the front. 'The officer feels that in

<sup>22</sup> Conference on 1–3 Dec. 1943. BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 497. A working meeting of NSFOs of the replacement army was held on 13–16 Dec. 1943; see Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 93.

<sup>23</sup> BA-MA RW 15/88; see also the complementary order of his chief of staff of 9 Dec. 1943, *ibid.* The previous meeting on 7 Dec. 1943 had still been held under the old designation of 'military-ideological guidance', report of 16 Dec. 1943, *ibid.* The reaction of the NSFOs to the primer is evident from the commanding officers' conference on 15 Feb. 1944, BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 35.

<sup>24</sup> BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 497. Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 93 mistakenly assumes that, apart from Gen. Rendulic, no front-line commander had reacted to the change in military-ideological guidance.

<sup>25</sup> Order of 22 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH 21–3/v. 497.

<sup>26</sup> KTB entry for 14 Dec. 1943, NOKW-021. Much more military in tone was Rendulic's order of 20 Apr. 1944, on the mental and spiritual preparation of the troops for the tasks of defence, BA-MA RH 24–69/15.

<sup>27</sup> Report on a visit to Fourth Panzer Army, 11–19 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/50; see report on the mission of the NSFO to commander South-West France (Navy) of 22 Dec. 1943, BA-MA

this decisive period of combat the Führer is deliberately directing the officer corps towards its political and ideological task.' The troops did besides want a stronger tie with and ideological guidance from their 'supreme commander Adolf Hitler'. On a critical note, Lersner pointed out that 'the more capable as a soldier and ideologically mature the officer entrusted with National Socialist guidance' was, the greater the benefit of National Socialist guidance would be for the military command.

The NSFO of the 258th Infantry Division believed at Christmas 1943 that 'morale' was not enough to see the colossal struggle through to victory. Morale was unstable. 'What alone can help us, what alone is beyond the enemy's grasp, is rock-steady faith in our rightness, faith in the great mission of our people, faith in our Führer, faith in victory!'<sup>28</sup> The commander of the 246th Infantry Division likewise wished for stronger ideological guidance of the soldier at the front by Hitler personally, and in the form of a catechism. Such a 'little book', setting out the 'great historic context of this struggle for our destiny, and the peril that threatens those in the west from Bolshevism on the one hand and from international Jewry on the other', would be felt by the front-line soldier as 'a never-failing source of strength, because it would be the Führer who was speaking to him'.<sup>29</sup> A 'catechism', or as Schmundt put it a 'drill manual', for the political-ideological education of the Wehrmacht was in fact already in preparation in the army personnel office.<sup>30</sup>

The renaming of 'military-ideological guidance' as 'National Socialist guidance' in late November 1943 had not been an ad hoc decision by Hitler; it resulted from several initiatives, from both the Wehrmacht and army and also from the Party. The various officials had of course spoken from different viewpoints, so that Hitler could choose. As early as May 1943 Passe, the liaison official between the Party chancellery and the OKW, had proposed to Gen. Reinecke renaming the 'officer for military-ideological guidance' as the 'officer for political-ideological guidance and education' and, in all orders and directives, 'using the term "National Socialist guidance" instead of the term "military-ideological education" used hitherto'.<sup>31</sup> Reinecke's reply is not known, but Keitel's intention was to rename the 'officer for military-ideological guidance' as 'officer for political guidance'.<sup>32</sup> Because Passe had raised objections to this,<sup>33</sup> the chief of the Wehrmacht high command was unable, at the

RH 36/552. Already during his first visit to the front, to First Panzer Army and Sixth Army from 9 to 21 Nov. 1943, Lersner had pointed out that Hitler's slogan of 16 Oct. 1943, 'Here the officer, there the *politruk*', had been effective at the front and met with a clear response, *ibid*.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from Pflanz, *Geschichte*, ii. 268. More than three decades later the author of this divisional history equates NS guidance with 'inner guidance' in the Bundeswehr!

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Sixth Army command, 19 Dec. 1943, *re* National Socialist guidance of men in the front line. Falley regretted that 'a certain weariness' was to be found at present among the front-line soldiers, BA-MA RH 26-246/44.

<sup>30</sup> It was entitled *Wofür kämpfen wir?* [What are We Fighting For?], see Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Chef AWA, 24 May 1943, BA-MA RW 6/v. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Radke's report to ChefGenStdH, 15 Oct. 1943, BA-MA RH 13/1.

<sup>33</sup> Recorded by Chef HWesAbt on 19 and 25 Oct. 1943, *ibid*.

commanding officers' conference at Bad Schachen, to announce the final decision on a new term. However, Keitel pointed out there that the term 'political orientation' of the serviceman, customary chiefly in the army, would 'not be readily understood by the ordinary squaddie'.<sup>34</sup> Rosenberg likewise spoke out at the commanding officers' conference and suggested to Reinecke that the existing term be changed to 'officer for political guidance and ideological education'. Probably because this had not found much favour, he made a second attempt four weeks later and personally proposed to Hitler the alternatives of officer for 'National Socialist education' or for 'ideological education'. On 17 November 1943 Hitler decided on the designation 'officers for National Socialist ideology'.<sup>35</sup> Yet only a few days later Rosenberg was chagrined to discover that Hitler had changed his mind and decided instead on 'officer for National Socialist guidance'.

What was more, it was clear that the Party chancellery alone was now responsible for cooperating, on the Party's behalf, in the desired political activation of the Wehrmacht. As Bormann and Pässe were convinced that the mere introduction, ordered on 28 November 1943, of the NSFO would be unable to change the 'inner value' of the Wehrmacht, they considered a 'fundamental order for the entire Wehrmacht' essential for achieving the enhancement of the political dynamic they were aiming at.<sup>36</sup> This was issued by Hitler on 22 December 1943 after Bormann, following conversations with Pässe and Reinecke, had prepared the ground.<sup>37</sup> The chief of the army affairs department was presumably suggested to Hitler by Bormann, because the latter regarded Keitel as 'much too timid, too overburdened, with not enough vigour'.

Building up the higher-echelon National Socialist guidance organization in the Wehrmacht proceeded relatively rapidly because the existing staffs for military-ideological guidance in the army, navy, and Luftwaffe high commands were available for the purpose. Gen. Reinecke likewise integrated his former *Amtsgruppe Inland* (home affairs department) of the General Army Office into his new staff. As he reported to Hitler on 7 January 1944, he had 'nothing left to do except to take in, for instance, the entire troops welfare service, which provides the Strength through Joy input, the input of the propaganda ministry, that is to say the entertainment provision for the people that has to be directed in some form or other—leisure time activities—as well as what I call the political bureaucracy that deals with all the ethnic issues, marriage applications, etc., which has practical consequences in the censorship field, etc.'<sup>38</sup>

The 'purge' of the officers for military-ideological guidance that was also demanded, together with selecting and training the NSFOs, on the other

<sup>34</sup> See Zenetti's report, *ibid.*, RL 19/69, and Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>35</sup> Rosenberg's letters to Keitel of 22 and 26 Nov. 1943, BA NS 8/174; Berghahn, *NSDAP*, 60ff.

<sup>36</sup> Pässe's discussion proposals for Bormann, *re* political activation of the Wehrmacht, 18 Dec. 1943, BA NS 6/142.

<sup>37</sup> Manuscript notes by Bormann of 21 Dec. 1943, BA-MA NS 6/761; see *Akten der Parteikanzlei*, 194.

<sup>38</sup> Weinberg, 'Adolf Hitler und der NS-Führungsoffizier', 447.

hand, took a great deal more time. So Reinecke gave orders, in Hitler's name, that 'the officers hitherto entrusted with the political-ideological guidance' were to be 'checked for their suitability'. Three days earlier the chief of the Wehrmacht high command had indicated the direction this measure would take. Only officers meeting the following conditions were to be employed as NSFOs: 'unconditional National Socialist, outstanding performance at the front, experience of and practical abilities in political-ideological guidance and education'.<sup>39</sup> Party membership and active political work as a political leader were desirable. Full-time NSFOs were envisaged for command authorities down to division level and the equivalent in the navy and Luftwaffe. In subordinate staffs down to battalion level the tasks of the NSFO were to be performed, on a part-time basis, by a staff officer.<sup>40</sup> The authorized strength of full-time NSFO posts in the Wehrmacht was 1,251.

Uniformity of organization and service regulations for the NSFOs in the army, navy, and Luftwaffe was the responsibility of the 'Chef NSF/OKW', Reinecke. On 9 February 1944 he issued 'Provisional directives for National Socialist guidance in the Wehrmacht'.<sup>41</sup> As before, sole responsibility for the political-ideological education and guidance of the troops remained with the commanding officer, even though the main weight of the activity rested on the unit commander. The NSFO could only act 'on behalf of and according to the directives of the commanding officer'; he was his responsible executive officer. The first task of the renamed officers—as no new ones had of course yet been appointed—was 'thoroughly to discuss the text, contents, meaning, and purpose of the Führer order of 22 December 1943 with all commanders and troop leaders'.<sup>42</sup>

Reinecke also saw to the necessary measures for cooperation between Wehrmacht and Party inside Germany through the relevant commanding generals and admirals.<sup>43</sup> The 'quite small' working staff of fanatical men, without officials (!), that Reinecke had in mind on 7 January 1944 was ready to start work by mid-February. Ten months later it already numbered 96 officers, only 14 of whom were active and 82 were from the reserve. Over 75 per cent of the 'OKW NS guidance staff' were Party members.<sup>44</sup>

The Wehrmacht services showed remarkable consistency in implementing Hitler's order for a *uniform* penetration of the Wehrmacht in accordance with *centrally* issued directives. Not only was there no fundamental resistance, but

<sup>39</sup> Keitel's instruction of 6 Feb. 1944, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 7.

<sup>40</sup> As early as 25 Dec. 1943 the commands of the army groups and army corps were reinforced by one NSFO post each, see Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 784. On the position of the NDFO see AOK 2 of 19 Apr. 1944, sgd. Weiß, BA-MA, RH 20-2/876.

<sup>41</sup> Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Bormann informed the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters of this, having sent them the above-quoted instructions of Keitel and Reinecke on 10 Mar. 1944, BA NS 6/142. See also Bormann's instruction to Ruder on this topic, 2 Jan. 1944, BA-MA NS 6/761.

<sup>43</sup> On 2 May 1944, BA-MA RH 13/v. 55.

<sup>44</sup> See the memo of 20 Dec. 1944, *re* one year of National Socialist guidance in the Wehrmacht, BA NS 6/782, fo. 17.



with this ideological 'guidance task' there were not even the customary rivalries between army, navy, and Luftwaffe: in this area they thought alike.<sup>45</sup>

In the navy high command the existing 'Military-Ideological Leadership Staff' under Rear-Adm. Hüffmeier was renamed 'National Socialist Leadership Staff' on 10 January 1944. Admittedly it did not answer directly to Dönitz but continued to come under Warzecha, the chief of the general navy main office (*Allgemeines Marinehauptamt*), which was reorganized as 'Navy Defence' (*Kriegsmarinewehr*) on 1 May 1944. In the course of this transformation several responsibilities of the former military department passed to the National Socialist Leadership Staff. On 20 December 1944 it comprised 32 officers (6 active and 26 reserve); of these 19 were Party members.<sup>46</sup> Although the commander-in-chief of the navy had not yet formally implemented the Führer order of 22 December 1943, working conferences were already being held for NSFOs, commanders, naval medical corps commanders, leaders of initiation courses, and U-boat commanders, in Weimar (9–10 Feb. 1944), Danzig (29 Jan.–2 Feb. 1944), and Angers/Loire (9–12 Feb. 1944). In the judgement of the organizers these courses were valuable, and the participants showed a marked interest in 'ideological issues'.<sup>47</sup>

The navy also continued to be interested in the schooling material of the SS, especially that on 'Education in the Red Army'. The central directive on 'National Socialist guidance in the navy' was issued by Dönitz on 13 March 1944.<sup>48</sup> He agreed with Hitler that 'the increasing harshness of the military and ideological conflict with our opponents demands tight uniform orientation and a *deepening* of National Socialist guidance'. The attached preliminary directives agreed almost word for word with those of the OKW/NSF. The navy commander-in-chief not only made it the duty of his commanding officers to be themselves unconditional guardians of the unity of the National Socialist nation, but also to educate the young officers in this spirit.<sup>49</sup> The widespread idea of there having been 'a specific programme of political schooling in the navy, diverging from the NSFO concept'<sup>50</sup> definitely belongs to the realm of legend.

The Luftwaffe similarly did not set up a new staff, but converted the existing 'Military Welfare Group' under the chief of air defence into the 'National Socialist Guidance Staff'. The head of the group, Fölkersamb, meanwhile promoted out of turn to major-general, remained in his post.<sup>51</sup> His staff, however, was with effect from 15 March 1944 placed under the chief of the Luftwaffe

<sup>45</sup> See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 467.

<sup>46</sup> BA NS 6/782, fo. 18.

<sup>47</sup> See Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 131.

<sup>48</sup> ObdM/AMA/NSF Ia, No. 2070, BA-MA RM 8/1733 (emphasis added). On 12 May 1944 Reinecke complained that this directive had not been agreed with him, BA NS 6/762.

<sup>49</sup> Commander-in-chief's address on 15 Feb. 1944, BA-MA RM 7/1742, as well as *IMT*, xxxv. 237 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 475. The legends have unfortunately been resurrected by Orth, 'Kampfmoral'.

<sup>51</sup> On Fölkersamb see Hassell, *Die Hassell-Tagebücher*, 421 (23 Feb. 1944).



personnel department, Col.-Gen. Loerzer. As Loerzer was an old fellow-pilot and close friend from First World War days, Göring had entrusted him 'with the implementation of the tasks of National Socialist guidance and education' lying within the framework of man management, naturally in line with his directives.<sup>52</sup> A mere five days later Loerzer issued the relevant instruction for the Luftwaffe, which, while exactly following the line set out by Hitler and Reinecke,<sup>53</sup> had not been agreed with them.

On 30 May 1944 a further concentration of people management took place. Not only was Loerzer's post renamed 'Head of Luftwaffe Personnel Procurement and National Socialist Guidance', but, in addition to the personnel department, National Socialist guidance staff, and chief of judiciary, the generals responsible for personnel deployment and new intake, as well as the inspector for troop service and education in the Luftwaffe, were now placed under him.<sup>54</sup> According to the accompanying service instruction he was 'Göring's first adviser and representative' in matters relating to his office. At the same time Loerzer had to keep the undersecretary of state for aviation and inspector-general of the Luftwaffe, Field Marshal Milch, and the chief of the general staff, Gen. Korten, 'currently informed on all important personnel procurement and National Socialist guidance matters'. Fölkersamb's 'National Socialist Guidance Staff' consisted of thirty-eight officers. In the absence of personal data—unlike the Wehrmacht, army, and navy high commands—no further details can be given on their military service or on Party membership.<sup>55</sup> The prime task of the Luftwaffe NSF staff was to hold brief courses on the duties of National Socialist guidance in all Air Fleet zones, and to support the commanding officers in their selection of NSFOs.<sup>56</sup> Needless to say, 'sole responsibility' for National Socialist guidance rested, in the Luftwaffe as well, with the unit commander. His person was defined by Rohden, of Dept. VIII (war history) of the Luftwaffe general staff, in the spring of 1944 as follows: 'Closely linked to the troops, his sole duty is being victorious together with them, supporting them in misfortune, never capitulating, forcing victory out of defeat, caring for them, setting an example to them in living and dying. To these great tasks, of promoting our National Socialist philosophy, so worthy

<sup>52</sup> Göring's directive of 15 Mar. 1944, BA-MA RL 3/51.

<sup>53</sup> 20 Mar. 1944, BA-MA E 3021. For making this source available to me I am grateful to my friend Manfred Messerschmidt. See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 468. Excerpt from Loerzer's instruction, BA NS 8/174. Needless to say, working conferences for NSFOs were held in the Luftwaffe as well even before this instruction, e.g. in Air Gau VI at Gütersloh (18–19 Jan. 1944), at I Fighter Corps in Zeist/Holland (24–5 Jan. 1944), and in Air Gau VII in Munich 2–4 Feb. 1944 where Col. von Fölkersamb dealt with Hitler's order of 22 Dec. 1943 and the 'NS Guidance Staff' to be newly formed in the Luftwaffe, BA-MA RL 19/70.

<sup>54</sup> Reichsmarschall und ObdL/GenQu. 2. Abt (I), No. 15272 of 30 May 1944, BA R 22/2282; see Boog, *Die deutsche Luftwaffenführung*, 291 n. 528.

<sup>55</sup> See memo of 20 Dec. 1944, re one year of National Socialist guidance in the Wehrmacht, BA NS 6/782. Duties and posts plan for the staff of 12 Apr. 1944, BA-MA RL 2 III/27. According to Boog, *Die deutsche Luftwaffenführung*, 290 n. 519, a total of 76 planned posts was envisaged.

<sup>56</sup> Contained in Loerzer's order of 11 June, 1944, BA-MA E 3021.

of a soldier, he should subordinate his entire being and actions.'<sup>57</sup> The NSFO should support the commanding officer, too, in the discharge of this task.

In the army the establishment of a National Socialist guidance staff took a somewhat different course. Although a chief—Gen. of mountain troops Ferdinand Schörner—was appointed on 7 January 1944, he was unavailable because of the military situation on the eastern front. Much to Keitel's regret he could not even be 'released for a limited time'.<sup>58</sup> In consequence, the army affairs department continued to work as before until Schörner actually took office as 'Chief of the Army's National Socialist Guidance Staff at the OKH (Field and Replacement Army)' on 14 March 1944.<sup>59</sup> At the beginning of February 1944 it distributed among the troops a 'provisional' service instruction for the NSFO; this still breathed the spirit of the military-ideological guidance of 1 June 1943.<sup>60</sup>

Schörner, meanwhile promoted to the rank of full general (*Generaloberst*), was working on his own 'directives for National Socialist guidance in the army'; these took an entirely different tone. Although he had discussed a draft with the chief of the army affairs department, Radke, and with the NSDAP Kreisleiter of Berchtesgaden, Stredele, he had not done so with Gen. Reinecke.<sup>61</sup> Stredele, a regimental comrade of Schörner's from the First World War, forwarded this draft, marked 'personal and confidential', to the relevant person in the Party chancellery, Ruder. With the formal appointment of Schörner a truly different wind blew from the OKH down to the troops. He was made of sterner stuff than Radke or Radke's former chief as 'general for special duties under the army commander-in-chief', Gen. Eugen Müller. Hitler described him as a 'fanatic'. In the opinion of his military superiors, Schörner was a 'hard, resolute soldier' who had recently, in the Nikopol bridgehead, led his corps 'skilfully and inventively', as well as imposing his 'iron will' upon his subordinate commanders and troops. Schörner would 'see any crisis through to the very last. Indefatigably active in maintaining discipline and the greatest possible welfare for the troops. Outstanding organizational talent. Physical capacities above average. Champions the National Socialist state with particular energy.'<sup>62</sup> This attitude had already been rewarded by Hitler on 30 January 1943 by the award of the Golden Party Badge, even though Schörner as an active officer was not a member of the Party.

<sup>57</sup> Essays on air war, iv, Tips for the Luftwaffe officer, 20 Apr. 1944, sgd. Rohden, BA-MA RL 2 IV/152.

<sup>58</sup> Weinberg, 'Adolf Hitler und der NS-Führungsoffizier', 456.

<sup>59</sup> Repr. in Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi 193; *Führer-Erlasse*, 403. The original of the notice of appointment effective 15 Mar. 1944 is in the 'Special Archive' (now Centre for the Preservation of Historico-documentary Collections), Moscow, 1424/1/35.

<sup>60</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 407. See Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>61</sup> Stredele letter of 18 Mar. 1944, in BA NS 6/762. Reinecke's protest of 19 May 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Assessment of 16 Jan. 1944 by Panzer Gen. Hans Hube, NA, RG 1027. Very similar is that of Col.-Gen. Karl Hollidt of 26 Mar. 1944. See Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 89.

His ideas on 'National Socialist guidance in the army' are clear from his directives issued on 28 March 1944.<sup>63</sup> 'In tone and content they undoubtedly reflected the intentions of Hitler and the Party even better than the relevant efforts by Keitel and Reinecke.'<sup>64</sup> Schörner not only proclaimed the combative philosophy of National Socialism to be the decisive weapon, in 'this war of ideologies', against the enemy's superiority in men and material and against 'his threadbare morale', but also defined the tasks of the NSFO as on a par with tactical leadership and training.

Schörner demanded of *every* officer unconditional faith in victory and unconditional loyalty to Hitler. An officer's merely loyal attitude to National Socialism was no longer enough in this hard struggle. 'There must be no contradiction between his readiness for action as a soldier and his political avowal.' Schörner urged the NSFOs to create an unshakeable fighting community and not to divide the troops into 'National Socialists and those of other beliefs'. For the militant task of the NSFO he could use only front-line soldiers who spoke the hard and sober language of the grenadier and who, at the same time, were 'activists and fanatical fighters for National Socialism'.

Although Schörner worked in the OKH for only a short while, his directives remained in force under his successor. He himself was sent to the eastern front on 'fire brigade' work, to assume command of Army Group South Ukraine. Although he was aware of his men's condition after heavy fighting against a numerically superior enemy and amid mud, filth, and cold, he demanded of the soldiers—wearing tattered uniforms and boots and short of ammunition and food—that they cling stubbornly to the ground and not surrender any position easily. On Hitler's 55th birthday Schörner promised, for himself and his soldiers, 'to follow him in soldierly loyalty to final victory . . . Unshakeable faith in Führer and nation gives us, in difficult hours, the strength for fanatical resistance.'<sup>65</sup>

Schörner's successor as chief of the army's National Socialist guidance staff was appointed on 15 May 1944—another general of mountain troops, Georg Ritter von Hengl, commanding XIX Mountain Army Corps, who had come from the Bavarian police. He had been credited by Schörner in February 1942, when his corps commander, with 'an unconditionally positive and activist attitude', and commended a year later for his 'leadership character of exceptional energy and inspiring élan', as well as an 'early National Socialist'. This judgement had been endorsed in March 1944 by Gen. Eduard Dietl, who had added: 'Brave and an example in battle . . . Excellent effect on the officer corps. Eager readiness for combat. Typical front-line officer with rich experience.'<sup>66</sup> It was

<sup>63</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v 404. These directives and the service instruction for the NSFOs are repr. in Jacobsen, 1939–1945, 653–9.

<sup>64</sup> Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 458.

<sup>65</sup> Order of the day, 20 Apr. 1944, BA-MA RH 24–202/3.

<sup>66</sup> NA, RG 1027, assessments of 6 Feb. 1942, 1 Apr. 1943 and 1 Mar. 1944. In 1934/5 Hengl was posted from the Bavarian police to the SS Verfügungstruppe, and had been commanding officer of the 2nd battalion of the 'Deutschland' Standarte. In October 1935 Hengl was, at his own request, transferred to the army and was a company commander in the 100th Mountain Infantry Regiment.

this special combination of political and military skills that qualified Hengl for his new office. But Schörner once also made the negative comment that this ideologically attuned officer would sometimes fail to see the difference between his own keenness for combat and indefatigable hardness and the not always similar mentality of those under him, and would then take drastic action. Like Schörner before him, Hengl answered directly to Hitler. As well as keeping 'close contact' with the chief of the general staff, Gen. Zeitzler, and the commander of the replacement army, Gen. Fromm, the new 'Chef NSF/Heer' had however now to cooperate 'in the *closest* agreement' with the chief of the army personnel office, Gen. Schmundt.<sup>67</sup> His staff, increased as early as March by the transfer of two sections from the army affairs department, by the end of 1944 numbered twenty officers, of whom nine were active and eleven in the reserve. Nine of them were Party members.

Thirty-five years after the end of the war Schörner and Hengl were still being credited with having fulfilled their task. Their success, it was said, however, had been helped by the 'skilful work' of Goebbels, as well as by the 'merciless warfare of our adversaries against our women and children and cultural assets, and by the political programme of annihilation against the Reich and all things German with the demand for unconditional surrender [*sic!*]'.<sup>68</sup>

The Party's working party on 'National Socialist guidance questions within the Wehrmacht' under Hauptbereichsleiter Ruder was set up on 7 January 1944. Here, too, organizational 'instant measures' were more urgent than any setting-out of content, even though Ruder had a clear objective in view—the political fanaticization of the Wehrmacht in order to turn it into a devout 'enforcer of the National Socialist will and of the wishes of our Führer'.<sup>69</sup> Like Reinecke, Ruder also had to fight on two fronts—with the Party and with the Wehrmacht. For both of them the principal 'means of war' was personnel selection. What mattered was, as Bormann had once put it, to find 'the most efficient men' for managing National Socialist guidance.<sup>70</sup> Here Wehrmacht and Party sometimes fought over the same people. Ruder, for example, wanted to get a particular first lieutenant posted to his working party, but Schmundt refused to release him because the commanding officer of the Ninth Army did not want to lose his NSFO in the midst of the heavy fighting.<sup>71</sup>

In the replacement army the Party was not content with suitable NSFOs being appointed at corps headquarters. It therefore created, at Gau level, working parties under the leadership of the relevant 'officer in charge of Wehrmacht issues' in order to enhance the 'political dynamics' in the homeland.<sup>72</sup> Reinecke, for his part, made it the duty of the Wehrmacht services to urge their

<sup>67</sup> Appointment notice of 28 May 1944 (emphasis added), BA-MA RH 13/v. 55; repr. in *Führer-Erlasse*, 414.

<sup>68</sup> Pflanz, *Geschichte*, ii 294.

<sup>69</sup> Ruder in his speech to Reichs- and Gauleiters, given at Bormann's behest on 23 Feb. 1944, repr. in Besson, *Geschichte des NSFOs*, 112. On Bormann's full powers see Hitler's directive of 19 June 1944, repr. in *Führer-Erlasse*, 424.

<sup>70</sup> Handwritten note on Ruder's draft of 29 Feb. 1944, BA NS 6/522.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Bormann order 53 of 28 Feb. 1944, BA NS 6/142.

subordinate commands and relevant NSFOs to maintain 'closest cooperation with the Gau officials for Wehrmacht issues and with the Kreisleiters.'<sup>73</sup>

The members of Ruder's working party in the Party chancellery were, without exception, Party members and reserve officers. Their average age was 'about 36'.<sup>74</sup> It was their task, using the 'best and most successful Party members in the forces and [our] young [active] officers trained for the job', to work on the men in such a way that from the National Socialist spirit within the Wehrmacht is born the strength 'capable of prevailing over even the greatest trials and finally achieving victory'.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Directive of 2 May 1944, BA-MA RH 13/v. 55.

<sup>74</sup> Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 139.

<sup>75</sup> Ruder to the Reichs- and Gauleiters on 23 Feb. 1944, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', 112.

## VIII. Ideological Indoctrination and Personnel Selection

CENTRALLY controlled fanaticizing of the Wehrmacht in the National Socialist spirit began towards the end of January 1944 with a schooling conference for commanders-in-chief and commanding officers of all Wehrmacht services in Posen (Poznań). According to the recollection of one of the participants, the second admiral of the Baltic Fleet, Rear-Adm. Sorge, there were 100 generals from the army, 30 from the Luftwaffe, and 30 admirals assembled at the castle on 25 and 26 January 1944. Gen. Heinrici, commanding the Fourth Army, on the other hand, reported to his wife that 200 generals, admirals, and Luftwaffe generals had been ‘drummed up’ for Posen by Gen. Reinecke.<sup>1</sup> Schmundt in particular had urged bringing the front-line commanders together, intending to use the Führer myth to ‘drill’ the commanders in National Socialist ideology.<sup>2</sup>

Hitler had not been against it in principle, but voiced organizational concerns. When Keitel and Bormann backed up Schmundt, Hitler had yielded and promised to ‘become very much involved’, and personally so. After all, the soldiers had to realize that what was at stake was ‘the “to be or not to be” of the German people’. There was, however, another reason—the successes of Soviet propaganda; Hitler thought the most dangerous things ‘that were happening at the front at this moment’ were the appeals being made by German officers who were prisoners in the hands of the Red Army. These appeared under a black-white-and-red flag, and were not clumsily drafted (they showed ‘the dialectics and diction of Jews’).<sup>3</sup> ‘If someone comes along [Hitler was undoubtedly meaning Gen. von Seydlitz-Kurzbach] and tells his own people

<sup>1</sup> Sorge, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, 106; Heinrici’s letter of 24 Jan. 1944, BA-MA N 265/158. Another participant at the conference, Col. Rudolf-Christoph Frhr von Gersdorff of the general staff, speaks of there being around 300 generals, admirals, and general staff officers, since a course for future corps commanders and corps chiefs of staff from Döberitz had also taken place. So far it has not been possible to find a list of those attending. According to Goebbels, he was sitting with Field Marshal Model, Generals Dollmann and Heinrici, and Gen. Erwin Jaenecke, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi, 26 Jan. 1944. Also invited were Panzer Gen. Adolf Kuntzen, Artillery Gen. Herbert Loch, and Lt.-Generals Friedrich Dihn and Wilhelm Raitzel, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See the conference of 7 Jan. 1944, repr. in Weinberg, ‘Adolf Hitler’, 450. Already a year earlier Lersner had proposed using the ‘Hitler myth’ for boosting fighting morale. See Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>3</sup> As early as 31 Oct. 1943 the provisional commander of the 246th Infantry Division had seen this dangerous ‘enemy propaganda’ as being, in its style, character, and contents, ‘a typical lying product of Jewish brains’ (NOKW-2436). The chief of staff of the Sixth Army believed that this National ‘Free Germany’ Committee could only be ‘a few disgruntled, broken men’. Surely no one could seriously believe ‘that the Jews are using Prussian-German officers to establish a German Soviet republic’, BA-MA RH 20-6/398, 17 May 1944. In October 1943 a special issue of

that if we lose the war we shall experience a wonderful prosperity together with the Russians, then that is a crime, an obscenity without parallel.' Dangerous because the German soldiers at the front did not know whether these appeals were true or false.

Although this top-echelon 'National Socialist guidance conference' soon found its way into the memoirs literature of the Second World War, it did not do so in the right context nor with the necessary factual clarity. The conference did not, for instance, become famous through being compared with the notorious conference of Party leaders in Posen at the beginning of October 1943, but because of a much-quoted interjection by Field Marshal von Manstein. Moreover the commander-in-chief of Army Group South did not make his interjection in Posen, but allowed himself to be carried away only later, at Rastenburg.<sup>4</sup> The commanding officers' conference in Posen towards the end of January was held in two parts, as that of the homeland commanders in Bad Schachen had been in mid-October 1943. At both of them the crowning conclusion was an address by Hitler at his headquarters in East Prussia. Addresses by high-ranking representatives of the OKW and Party had been given in Posen before; those by Goebbels and Hitler have been preserved.

Goebbels spoke on 25 January 1944: he was that day 'happy, cheerful, and in splendid form'.<sup>5</sup> After all the years of relevant measures being taken, he still saw a need to educate the German generals; they were politically immature, he believed, and had only a superficial understanding of National Socialism. That was why he impressed on his listeners that National Socialism in the Wehrmacht must become a 'phenomenon in depth' if it was to avoid 'crisis situations' arising in Germany as they had in Italy. Although he had always rejected the idea of the 'political commissar', it was now necessary to provide the troop commander with a 'political educator'—that is to say, the NSFO. Ideology was just as important as weaponry. Once the troops had been given the 'basic political concepts' and shown how they applied to the 'war as a struggle of ideologies', then the Wehrmacht would, with zest and vigour, 'continue to fight until the enemy realizes that he cannot bring us down'.<sup>6</sup>

Probably more by accident than by agreement with Goebbels, Himmler the following day explained to the generals how one of the basic political concepts of National Socialism, 'race struggle', was being implemented in the war by his 'ideological troops'. In his lecture notes the Reichsführer SS had jotted down: 'Jewish question . . . total solution . . . not allow avengers to arise for

*Mitteilungen für das Offizierkorps* was published giving the reaction of the OKW. On the NKFD and BDOs generally see Ueberschär, *Das Nationalkomitee 'Freies Deutschland'*, 269 ff., and Heider, 'Reaktionen', 619 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Stahlberg, *Bounden Duty*, 326.

<sup>5</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi, 26 Jan. 1944.

<sup>6</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 413, Goebbels's speech as an official memorandum from the OKW/NS leadership staff; see the officially distributed special issue of Goebbels's article 'Bahnbrecher der neuen Zeit', BA-MA RH 36/552.



our children.’<sup>7</sup> As a further argument justifying the murder of the European Jews—men, women, and children—Himmler referred to the ‘very considerable calming [of the security situation] in the Government-General brought about by the extermination operations in the ghettos of Warsaw and Lublin’. Evidently, it was not so much ‘mysterious passages’ about particularly difficult and burdensome tasks for ‘our generation’ that disquieted Rear-Adm. Sorge in Posen<sup>8</sup> as the explicitness with which Himmler told the Wehrmacht of a crime being committed by the state. An SS officer observing the conference had the impression, on 26 January 1944, that the generals and admirals were ‘personally none too pleased’ by these disclosures. Only at the end, when Himmler spoke about the need for ideological guidance and education, had ‘the listeners [been] downright fascinated’ and rewarded him with ‘magnificent applause . . . from genuinely delighted hearts’.<sup>9</sup>

From Posen the participants in this ‘National Socialist guidance conference’ travelled by special train and on a heavily guarded line to Rastenburg. A few, such as the navy commander-in-chief and Field Marshal von Manstein, joined them only there. On 27 January Hitler made a ‘speech in very serious mood’ of nearly two hours’ duration,<sup>10</sup> a verbatim record of which has survived.<sup>11</sup> Some of the field commanders, who had already held a high-level command in February 1939, would have found much of what Hitler said in January 1944 familiar—such as his demand that, ‘if [he] as supreme leader should ever be deserted at any time’, the entire officer corps would have to rally round him ‘with swords drawn’.<sup>12</sup> He demanded of every officer that he be not only loyal, but a fanatical representative of the National Socialist state. Thus provoked by Hitler, Manstein called out: ‘And so it will be, my Führer!’ Hitler was neither put out, nor did he conclude his address ‘somewhat abruptly’, as Manstein

<sup>7</sup> BA NS 19/4014, see Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 201. This speech is similar to the other ‘generals’ speeches’ of 5 May, 24 May, and 21 June 1944, of which verbatim records are available. The above-quoted passage from the speech was repeated by one who heard it at Sonthofen, Maj.-Gen. Hellmuth Stieff, to the operations department of the army general staff. See minute by Georg-Heino von Münchhausen of 7 May 1944, as well as the uncritical comment by Meyer, *Heusinger*, 858 nn. 218, 219. On 24 May Himmler too spoke of sound nerves and strong sense of duty which had helped him solve the ‘Jewish question . . . in accordance with orders and rational realization, and uncompromisingly’.

<sup>8</sup> Sorge, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, 106. Sorge was however already familiar with Himmler’s observations at the naval commanding officers’ conference in Weimar on 16 Dec. 1943. See Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>9</sup> BA NS 19/3271, Note of 29 Jan. 1944. Gersdorff reports that the Posen experience had only for a small minority been the most upsetting of their lives, repr. in Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 146.

<sup>10</sup> Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 126. The 27 January date had once been the ‘Kaiser’s birthday’.

<sup>11</sup> BA NS 6/777. Manstein’s and Sorge’s quotations have therefore to be corrected, repr. in Manstein, *Lost Victories*, 511–12, and *Vom Kaiserreich zur Bundesrepublik*, 107–8. Hitler is correctly quoted in Below, *At Hitler’s Side*, 191, and Irving, *Hitler’s War*, 598.

<sup>12</sup> This maxim of Hitler’s for the education of officers in the National Socialist spirit was forwarded on 11 Feb. 1944 to the personnel (IIa) officers of the general army office, BA-MA RH 15/185. See the observations on ‘Erziehung und Haltung des Offiziers’ in the Manual for Senior ADCs, sgd. Schmundt, of 30 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RHD 23/9.

believes in his memoirs. Although Hitler was irritated, he acknowledged Manstein's positive attitude with approval. Because there were also other examples, he thought it necessary for education in the National Socialist spirit 'to take still more major steps forward'. His task, at any rate, was to ensure that 'this attitude is enforced as a matter of principle'. By this Hitler understood that 'everything has to be done to keep our people at home united, and to give our Wehrmacht fanatical faith not only in the necessity of the struggle but also in the self-evident certainty of success, and to take action wherever anything appeared that could militate against it'.

As Hitler was not assuming he had a homogeneous officer corps already united in this uncompromising attitude, he reiterated rhetorically: 'Who possesses the nerves and the strength to lead the struggle with the ultimate fanaticism, and to transmit this fanaticism to every single soldier at the front and to every single fellow-citizen in the homeland?' He at any rate—and this was the conclusion of Hitler's address to the assembled field marshals, admirals, and generals—had 'no other wish than to follow the natural law [of selection] that states that only he receives life who fights for it and who is prepared, if necessary, to stake his own life for it'.

Hitler had remained faithful to himself. Twenty years earlier, at his trial before the people's court in Munich, he had pointed out that a nation's weapons 'acquired real strength only if they were carried by a fanatical will for victory, and if that will had truly become one shared by the whole nation'.<sup>13</sup> Entirely in line with this conviction, Hitler on 28 January 1944 issued an order to the commander-in-chief South-West, Kesselring, for the 'battle for Rome'. Tactically correct and clear orders were not enough: 'the army, the Luftwaffe, and the forces of the navy must, in all their officers and men, be imbued with the fanatical will to come through this struggle victorious and not to flag until the last enemy has been destroyed or thrown back into the sea. It must be waged with righteous hatred for an enemy who is conducting a merciless war of annihilation against the German people,' hard and merciless even against their own troops should these 'fail at this decisive hour'.<sup>14</sup>

While Heinrici found the days in Posen 'interesting', even though they had been 'pitched on a sombre note',<sup>15</sup> other commanders-in-chief seem to have returned to the front 'depressed'. As Field Marshal Kleist wrote to Goebbels, they had had a feeling that 'they were not being trusted, and they believed that they did not deserve that'.<sup>16</sup> Goebbels had no sympathy at all for the senior generals; on the contrary, in secret alliance with Hitler's chief ADC for the Wehrmacht he turned the tables on them by drafting a declaration of devotion by the army's field marshals.<sup>17</sup> In it they not only rejected Gen. von Seydlitz,

<sup>13</sup> *Der Hitler-Prozeß*, 37. I am grateful to my friend Rainer Erb, Berlin, for this reference.

<sup>14</sup> KTB SKL, pt. A, liii. 500–1; repr. in *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung*, 241–2 (not in English).

<sup>15</sup> Letter of 27 Jan. 1944, BA-MA N 265/158. What Heinrici found stimulating was meeting 'comrades from all corners of Europe'.

<sup>16</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi, 19 Feb. 1944.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1944, Schmunt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 129–30.

but also promised Hitler 'unflinching loyalty', assuring him that they would 'anchor his ideas, inspired by high ideals, in the army in such a way that every soldier in the army becomes an even more fanatical fighter for the National Socialist future of our *Volk*'.<sup>18</sup> This pledge was ceremoniously presented to Hitler on 19 March 1944.

At the next schooling conference, however, those present again felt offended, as recorded in an 'occurrence report' from the army personnel office. 'Such offence is caused, for instance, if speakers who have not been fortunate enough themselves to fight against the enemy in the east voice generally worded doubts about the National Socialist attitude of the officers. Yet the bulk of army officers, if only on the basis of their front-line experience in the trenches and anti-tank dugouts, are *convinced National Socialists in practice*; from such a conference they expect a bolstering of their attitude, and to be provided with materials for the National Socialist guidance they are to give.'<sup>19</sup>

After the National Socialist guidance conference in Posen, senior commanding officers of all Wehrmacht services were summoned three more times for schooling in the National Socialist spirit prior to 20 July—at the Sonthofen Order Castle on 5–7 May, 23–6 May, and 19–22 June 1944.<sup>20</sup> The location where Hitler spoke to the participants also changed from Rastenburg to the Platterhof above Berchtesgaden, although only for the courses of 23–6 May and 19–22 June. At the former conference Himmler again spoke.<sup>21</sup> At Sonthofen, moreover, the newly appointed 'chief of the National Socialist guidance staff for the field army and replacement army' introduced himself and explained the task the Führer had entrusted him with. What mattered was 'to activate and fanaticize the army, and to ensure that everyone knows what he is fighting for'. The troops had to be educated so that they had 'a boundless will for annihilation and hatred'; just being a good soldier was not enough. 'The German officer [had] been given an enormous task', that of educating the men in a militant spirit for National Socialist Germany.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Declaration of 19 Mar. 1944, repr. in *Das Nationalkomitee 'Freies Deutschland'*, 280–1. On 16 Apr. 1944 Seydlitz was sentenced to death in absentia by the Reich court martial.

<sup>19</sup> BA NS 6/157, lecture note by Maj.-Gen. Ernst Maisel, 10 May 1944 (emphasis added). Schmundt passed it on to Bormann as strictly confidential. Whereas Himmler as a lecturer was generally judged positively, Reinecke rejected the general because of the 'nature of his tone and the expressions he uses (Berlin slang)'; his calling for 'at long last a new type of officer to now be created' also failed to convince.

<sup>20</sup> Originally the second generals' conference was to have been held again in Posen, on 18–20 Feb. 1944. It is not clear from the sources whether the planned fifth conference (17–21 July 1944) was cancelled altogether, or whether only the summons for certain generals was cancelled. See three relevant telexes, BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 8.

<sup>21</sup> BA NS 19/4014, handwritten notes and record of the speech. See the excerpts in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 203, 208. The navy was able to send 15 admirals as participants.

<sup>22</sup> Copy in BA-MA RW 6/v. 404 and RH 14/12. The BdE distributed it, sgd. Jüttner, on 21 July 1944 as a binding order for the schooling of the replacement army. A year earlier, on 5 Mar. 1943, Fifth Panzer Army headquarters had demanded of the men in Tunisia a cold, deep-seated hatred of 'the English, who, enraged at our National Socialist guidance of the nation, are selling off the whole of Europe to Bolshevism', BA-MA RH 19 VIII/359. I am grateful to my friend Gerhard Schreiber, Freiburg, for this reference.

Gen. Hengl believed there would have been no need for an NSFO if the Wehrmacht had been granted a longer period of peace.<sup>23</sup> 'Total war, on the other hand, which is now nearing its climax, calls for other means and a more intense mobilization of all forces.' Hitler's speeches were described by Hengl as the high points of the generals' conferences: 'If anyone wasn't gripped there, then he is beyond hope.' The real purpose of these meetings was made clear by Hitler on 26 May 1944. It was his 'rock-solid conviction' that this war in particular—against an 'ideological adversary of fanatical consistency'—would deepen more and more the National Socialist philosophy in the Wehrmacht. The new education of the people, and the racial attitude of the whole German nation as a result of the 'removal' of the Jews, would help win the war. 'For of one thing there can be no doubt: either we succumb in this war—then that is the end of our nation; or we are victorious—and that is what will happen—and then that is the beginning of our domination over Europe.' The minutes record prolonged and tempestuous applause.<sup>24</sup>

Four weeks later Hitler spoke for the last time to those attending a National Socialist guidance conference for the generals.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile the western Allies had landed in northern France, and the certainty that they could be thrown back into the sea had proved illusory. On the anniversary of BARBAROSSA Hitler gave no survey of Germany's worsened strategic situation, but spoke at great length about the war as such being the indispensable precondition for the natural selection of the stronger and the elimination of the weaker. Admittedly, 'Cherbourg' was mentioned once, as were the growing 'internal squabbles and differences' on the enemy's side. The central point was his appeal to the generals and admirals to be, like Gen. Dietl, 'total bearers of the faith' and of the conviction 'that we shall win this war come what may . . . It cannot be otherwise, and it must not be otherwise.' 'Forceful, uniform education' was necessary to ensure the Wehrmacht did not give up but continued to

<sup>23</sup> On this issue see Förster, 'Vom Führerheer der Republik'.

<sup>24</sup> BA, NS 19/4014, repr. in Wilhelm, 'Hitlers Ansprache', 141ff. The activity report of the army personnel office notes—unfortunately with a wrong date (26 Apr. 1944)—that Hitler put special emphasis on 'the decisive task of the leadership corps in the nation's struggle for its destiny, demanding that every officer must identify with the ideas of National Socialism and be seen as a representative of today's state. There is no such thing as a non-political officer.' Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 156.

<sup>25</sup> Speech at the Platterhof on the Obersalzberg on 22 June 1944, BA NS 6/777; excerpts repr. in Himmler, *Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945*, 193, 196, 199–200, 203–4. Among those present were Generals Hans Felber and Hans-Detlef Herhudt von Rhoden. The latter criticized the conference for the fact that the officers were merely instructed, without being able to put forward suggestions for the further work of National Socialist guidance. In Rhoden's opinion Party leaders should also attend this conference and 'receive some lessons from the front'. Only thus could there be a truly successful cooperation between Wehrmacht and Party. Above all, the impression must not arise that today, in the tenth year after the revolution and in the middle of the toughest fighting, the officers still need to be instructed about the meaning of the National Socialist movement and its ideas'. Entry for 29 June 1944, BA-MA RL 2 IV/68. Four days later, on 26 June 1944, Hitler—at Speer's urging—also spoke to the 'defence economy leaders' at the Platterhof, *Es spricht der Führer*, 335–68; see *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 391. This speech too was the climax and conclusion of a preceding conference in Linz.

fight, 'until eventually it suits our accursed enemies, and they are prepared to conclude peace with us'. This time it was left to Field Marshal Keitel to make the closing remarks. For himself and his comrades he vowed fealty to Hitler—in a clear allusion to the legendary oath by the Swiss freedom fighters in the Rütli meadow in 1291—and gave the 'German salute': 'We wish', he swore, 'to be his most loyal National Socialists, and we wish to be his most fanatical and most faithful warriors.' On 20 July 1944 was to come proof that there was also a different belief within the Wehrmacht.

What was the officer corps like at the beginning of 1944? This is not the place for a quantitative or qualitative analysis; this has already been given elsewhere,<sup>26</sup> at least for the army and Wehrmacht. What interest us here are contemporary assessments of the officer corps, assessments that significantly affected both the schooling of the Wehrmacht in the National Socialist spirit and the selection of NSFOs. Derogatory remarks about the German generals as a whole or about individual commanders, such as are found in large numbers in Goebbels's diary for 1944, will not be reproduced.

Hitler himself complained that the 'enormous upheaval' that had taken place in the German nation since 1933 had remained hidden from the 'officer corps from the in-between Reich' (i.e. the Weimar Republic).<sup>27</sup> These former Reichswehr officers, because of their monarchist attitude, their many years of loyalty to a state at odds with itself, and their apolitical education, were unable to identify with the new 'spirit and ideas' of National Socialism. Besides, the war had come too soon for the officer corps, and indeed all soldiers, to be systematically and uniformly educated *before* they went into the Wehrmacht. In the struggle 'for the existence of the German people and the future of Europe' (he said on 27 November 1943) there was no choice but to try and catch up 'with whatever can be caught up with'. At nearly the same time deliberate efforts were being made in Wehrmacht personnel policy to ensure its officer corps consisted 'of real leaders' and not of 'officials'.<sup>28</sup> What had begun with the selection of senior ADCs in the autumn of 1942 was now continued by a special selection of commanders and backed up, at the lower levels, by special courses for those dealing with personnel matters.

Entirely in agreement with Hitler's views, the chief of the National Socialist guidance staff for the field army and replacement army had, at the preceding course in Sonthofen, judged that the Reichswehr officers had 'had to grow up apolitical, and had only slowly and with difficulty come to terms with the National Socialist Idea'. Hengl, himself not an officer of 'the in-between Reich', nevertheless believed that he would be able to 'win them over totally' and 'harness them to playing an active role'. Needless to say, there was also a

<sup>26</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 918 ff., and Jürgen Förster, 'Manipulation oder Evolution? Die Wehrmacht-Elite in der zweiten Kriegshälfte', unpubl. manuscript (Potsdam, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> On 26 May 1944 in Berchtesgaden, Wilhelm, 'Hitlers Ansprache', 141.

<sup>28</sup> Hitler on 27 Oct. 1942, see *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 918; Förster, 'Manipulation oder Evolution?' (see n. 26).

second group of already 'clearly aligned personalities full of fanaticism for the Idea; these were indefatigably educating their men at every opportunity'. He did not, however, shut his eyes to a third kind of officer, those who inwardly rejected National Socialism. These, 'while they had taken their oath to the Führer, were not to be won over as true National Socialists either in their hearts or in their minds'; according to Gen. Hengl, these were 'exceptional phenomena'. There was no need, he believed, to take any measures against them, as 'the young generation, and time' would by themselves overtake them. 'Anyone, however, who knowingly sabotages the Führer's orders [on political activation] must encounter the full severity of the law.'<sup>29</sup>

To a senior Party official such as Gauleiter Frauenfeld it was obvious that the Party should turn its attention to two groups of officers in the Wehrmacht. For one thing, there were in the rear-area services a number of older reserve officers who, because of their 'previous political ties tend to take a negative attitude, just as their physical constitution and evident views on race allow them to be recognized as persons rejecting National Socialism'. For another, those general staff officers who, aged slightly over 30, were already lieutenant-colonels or colonels and more or less good at their job, but who possessed no ideological education and looked down on National Socialism 'from an atmosphere of ice-cold intellectualism', should be kept an eye on with the help of the NSFOs, and gradually got rid of.<sup>30</sup>

Immediately after Hitler's basic order of 22 December 1943, Lt.-Col. von Lersner also reflected on the past and future relationship of National Socialism and the officer corps.<sup>31</sup> With his thorough knowledge of the wartime army he differentiated between the officers' attitude 'to the idea, to the Party, and to the Führer'. Lersner, too, proceeded from the 'historical baggage' of the German officer corps, especially the older officers. Their 'political instinct' had already been 'undermined' in the Wilhelminian era. One thing that weighed particularly on the army officer corps, according to Lersner, was that it felt slighted vis-à-vis the other Wehrmacht services. 'This sense of being second rate' had arisen when Hitler, having assumed supreme command of the army 'at the hour of greatest peril', had failed when the crisis had been overcome to return command to an army general. 'The Führer's holding on to supreme command, in spite of ever new tasks burdening him, was bound to be seen by every soberly and coolly thinking officer as a negative assessment of the present-day quality of the officer class.' Such a sense of marginalization was

<sup>29</sup> BA-MA RH 14/12. On National Socialist guidance in the replacement army see WK VII of 20 June 1944 and discussion points of the NSFO at the commanding officers' conference in Munich on 6-7 July 1944, BA-MA RH 53-7/680.

<sup>30</sup> Report for Goebbels on a front-line visit prior to 20 July in the northern and central sector of the eastern front, as well as in Italy, of 27 July 1944, Centre for the Preservation of Historical-Documentary Collections (prev. Special Archive), Moscow, 1363/1/82.

<sup>31</sup> 'Weltanschauung und Soldatentum', n.d., together with minute on 'National Socialist leadership and the officer corps' of 31 Jan. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/50; see also the continuation of 23 Feb. 1944, *ibid.*



however in the long run standing in the way of the desired 'supreme fanaticism'. In the officers' attitude to the National Socialist Idea there was still a lack of 'pride in the Idea and in using it as a weapon'. It was beyond all doubt that National Socialism was the only possible way of thinking and living for the individual as much as for the German *Volk* as a whole; what was missing was the taking of 'the step everywhere from realization to faith'. The officers' attitude to the Party was different. 'All too often, the personally unsoldierlike and politically disastrous attitude of the civilian administration had painfully damaged the Party's image, and what was more not just among the officer corps but especially with the rank-and-file soldier.'

As for the army's relationship with Hitler, Lersner believed that especially after Stalingrad, which the officer corps saw as a defeat of the leadership, it had called, 'for factual as well as human reasons, for a stronger inner link with the Führer'. From that it had expected an 'enhancement of the will to fight and to win'. In conclusion Lersner thought that with the introduction of 'military-ideological guidance' the army had already succeeded in 'shedding the burden of apolitical thinking'. What was still lacking was to demonstrate time and again to the officer corps the connection between soldierdom and ideology. Admittedly, what was needed at the front was not so much 'schooling in knowledge' as above all 'faith and strength of will'. Lersner, moreover, did not think it right that, on the basis of rank, generals alone were summoned to the conferences. If they were to be accompanied by their NSFOs, 'then the Führer and those fighting alongside him would be speaking not just to generals but, in a broader sense, to the troops themselves' (23 Feb. 1944). This suggestion, however, was not taken up by the Wehrmacht or by the Party; the NSFOs were separately schooled and selected.

The centre for the selection of the new NSFOs was the NSDAP's Order Castle on the Crössinsee lake in Pomerania. The real goal of the joint endeavours of Wehrmacht and Party to create this corps of National Socialist leaders was to convey to the troops not ideological knowledge but a strong faith and a strong will to see through—despite any and every setback—the fight being forced upon them. Those who would assist the troops' commanders in matters of ideological guidance were to be enabled, at Crössinsee, to draw from National Socialism their faith in Germany's victory and to pass it on to the troops by their own example and attitude. The commander-in-chief of the Eighteenth Army, Gen. Georg Lindemann, similarly believed that faith in victory was the Wehrmacht's strongest weapon.<sup>32</sup> Everyone should be told why it was worth continuing to fight. The resolve to do battle and steadiness of faith on the part of the soldiers was in turn considered in the highest quarters to be 'a decisive factor in the overall attitude of those at home'.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See the directive on military-ideological guidance No. 18 of 8 Jan. 1944, BA-MA RW 6/v. 407.

<sup>33</sup> HPA, directive of 5 Jan. 1944, *re* Zersetzung der Wehrkraft (Heimtücke), BA-MA RL 5/793.



Alongside the official selection of full-time and part-time NSFOs slowly getting under way at the central courses in Crössinsee there was also an internal selection within the forces.<sup>34</sup> To avoid losing time, the officers who had been entrusted with political-ideological guidance up to then were to continue their work, albeit while being checked for their suitability.<sup>35</sup> Three days previously Keitel had laid down the criteria for this: unconditional National Socialist, outstanding personality, excellent front-line performance, as well as experience and practical capabilities for political-ideological guidance and education.<sup>36</sup> NSDAP membership and political activity as a political leader were desirable but not a condition (otherwise no officers on the active list could have been appointed as NSFOs). But even the Party was not, in spite of the limited possibilities for doing so, interested in being able to assess them politically. This drawback was compensated for by limited-time secondments of active officers to leading posts in the Party.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the army personnel office opened up another opportunity for the NSDAP to exert influence on the army. As of 1 July 1944, Party functionaries were to be given a 'preferential opportunity' to become officers since they had already proved their leadership qualities in the movement.<sup>38</sup>

Among the troop formations, too, 'every effort' (in OB West's words) was made to fill the full-time NSFO positions and 'the best man [was] just about good enough' for this post, which was to have 'nothing in common with that of a *politruk* or commissar' (XIV Panzer Corps). Whenever possible, 'especially well-proven officers with high decorations and outstanding soldierly attitude' were to be selected as advisers to their commanders. After all, the purpose of using them was 'so to temper the spirit and attitude of the troops on the basis of our National Socialist ideology and our soldierly tradition that we shall prevail in the face of all enemies'. The chief of staff of XIV Panzer Corps rated the influence an NSFO could have on the striking power of a division higher than the leadership of a single unit.<sup>39</sup> Col. Hans-Georg Schmidt von Altenstadt did not relieve his first staff officers of their duty of 'looking after the soul and the personal wellbeing of every single one of our soldiers' and of passing on to their subordinates their 'own confidence and toughness'.

The next most senior officer to him in the panzer corps, the commander-in-chief of the Tenth Army in Italy, Gen. von Vietinghoff, likewise commented positively on the meaning and purpose of the task of 'National Socialist guidance'. He did not limit the carrying out of this task to the NSFO, but saw it as being demanded of all officers, in particular the unit

<sup>34</sup> See the list of 34 NSFOs with Third Panzer Army of 15 Jan. 1944, BA-MA RH 21-3/v. 497. Only three were judged unsuitable.

<sup>35</sup> Reinecke's directive of 9 Feb. 1944, BA-MA RW 6/v. 490, and Loerzer's directive of 13 May 1944 for the Luftwaffe, BA-MA E 3021.

<sup>36</sup> See Ch. VII of this section.

<sup>37</sup> See Ruder's memo for Bormann, 18 May 1944, BA, NS 6/360. The army personnel office was also interested in such postings.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum leaflet for new officer intake No. 8, sgd. Schmudt, *ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> Personal letter to the Ia of subordinated divisions, 18 Mar. 1944, BA-MA RH 24-14/110. I am grateful to my friend Gerhard Schreiber for this reference.

commanders. 'In a politically well-oriented unit a few words from the unit commander will be sufficient in combat to sweep the men on to fanatical action.' The core of political, i.e. National Socialist, guidance was defined by Vietinghoff on 19 April 1944 as 'maintenance of a uniform ideological forging of will among the troops; arousal of a fanatical dedication to the struggle for our nation's existence; unreserved obedience to the Führer and to his historic calling to lead our nation'.<sup>40</sup> The NSFO noted in his subsequent activity report that unsuitable guidance officers had been replaced, so that in all corps and divisions 'well-proven National Socialists and decorated front-line soldiers' were now active full-time.<sup>41</sup>

Other field commanders and commanders-in-chief laid greater emphasis on the role of the commanders and of the officer corps in general: it was on that that the 'National Socialist guidance as an essential means of maintaining and steadily enhancing the combat will' of the troops would stand or fall.<sup>42</sup> Others again, because of the identical objective of strengthening of the will to win, and the identical foundation on National Socialist ideology, were linking *troop* guidance with troop welfare.<sup>43</sup> The most active propagandist for an ideological orientation of the Wehrmacht, Lersner, likewise considered it especially important to impress on all officers time and again the 'intimate link between soldierdom and ideology . . . in order to serve our nation's will to survive not only with our weapons, but also with our spirit'.<sup>44</sup> On this they should speak as soldier to soldier. But Lersner was well aware that not every officer was able to talk to his men 'as a soldier and politically at the same time'.<sup>45</sup>

Gen. Rendulic, C-in-C of the Second Panzer Army, extended man management by his officers in the sense that 'even in the *last man* the awareness is awakened that he is *not* the Unknown Soldier being submerged in the great mass', but that matters '*also depend on him and that, especially at times of crisis, it is he who is being counted on*'.<sup>46</sup> Field Marshal Model, commanding Army Group Northern Ukraine, similarly described the example given by the officer as the most important element in the National Socialist education and guidance of the troops. However, it was not enough for the officer to believe that 'his love of the fatherland, the fulfilment of his duty, and his obedience to the Führer went without saying and exhausted the political content

<sup>40</sup> BA-MA RH 20-10/265. With this directive the C-in-C of the Tenth Army also endorsed Schörner's attached directives of 28 Mar. 1944. See Ch. VII of this section.

<sup>41</sup> Orders of the day for April and May 1944 of 8 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 20-10/265.

<sup>42</sup> See the order of C-in-C Army Group Centre of 16 Jan. 1944, sgd. Busch, and the commanding officers' conference in military district VII (Munich) on 15 Feb. 1944, BA-MA RH 19 II/201 and RH 53-7/v. 185 resp. For C-in-C Panzer Group West the education of the young soldiers for 'emotional toughness' was the essential aspect, BA-MA N 254/39.

<sup>43</sup> See the conference of the NSFOs of military commander France in Paris on 29 Jan. 1944, BA-MA RH 36/552, as well as the relevant memorandum sheet of commander NW France of 29 Mar. 1944, BA-MA RW 35/1227.

<sup>44</sup> Thoughts on 23 Feb. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/50.

<sup>45</sup> Report on a visit to the front at Army Group North, of 20 Feb. 1944, *ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> Directive of 20 Apr. 1944 on ideological and spiritual preparation of the troops for the task of defence, BA-MA RH 24-69/15.

of his profession'. Only understanding and faith would make the 'political soldier who was up to coping with this struggle for the life of the nation'.<sup>47</sup> It was the task of the NSFOs not only to advise their commanding officers expertly, but 'the highest aim of their work must be to raise the German officer corps, unequalled as it was in the world in troop training and tactical leadership, to the same level in their political and ideological leadership of the German soldier'.

Needless to say, the work of the NSFOs was made easier and 'received a new impetus' when, after periods of holding out and withdrawals, military successes were once again being scored. That was the opinion of the chief of staff of the Second Army, Maj.-Gen. Henning von Tresckow, after his troops had broken through the encirclement at Kovel'. He reminded his NSFOs that for nearly a year they had not had 'such a favourable opportunity decisively to strengthen our soldiers' will for combat and confidence in their own strength. Now the time has come!'<sup>48</sup> Dönitz chose a very similar tone when appealing to the naval forces stationed in the west to be aware, 'as soldier, warrior, and man', of the importance of repelling the invasion of France and of fighting mercilessly in every situation. However, the navy commander-in-chief went even further: if any man did not do his duty to the ultimate degree, he said, 'I will destroy him with ignominy and shame.'<sup>49</sup>

Even adverse events were put to advantage for 'National Socialist guidance work among the troops'. The National Socialist staff of the commander-in-chief of the replacement army, for instance, felt that the present predicament demanded that they use the fighting for Cherbourg in order 'to inculcate fanaticism against Bolshevism and Anglo-Americanism'. The men of all Wehrmacht services had supreme military achievements to their credit. The official formulation was: 'Never in history has self-sacrifice been meaningless; it propels the nation forward to heroic engagement and in the end makes the enemy realize the pointlessness of his struggle, and shrink back from suffering heavy losses.'<sup>50</sup> It is difficult to judge from the sources available what effect such appeals had on the troops.

The first *central* selection course for NSFOs was held on 8–21 March 1944 at the Order Castle at Crössinsee. The Party provided the building and many of the speakers, and the Wehrmacht was responsible for organization, teaching staff, and of course the participants. The proposed speakers and those leading the working groups had, shortly before, been thoroughly briefed in Potsdam on the

<sup>47</sup> Guidelines for the National Socialist education and guidance of the troops, 1 May 1944, BA-MA N 756/60. Model, however, also stressed the idea of welfare, especially for men whose homes had been bomb-damaged.

<sup>48</sup> Order to Army NSFO, 7 Apr. 1944, BA-MA RH20-2-1375. On 20 Apr. 1944 the C-in-C of the Second Army ordered that the handbook for the NSFO entitled 'What are We Fighting For?' was to be the Army's ideological catechism. See Ch. VI of this section.

<sup>49</sup> Decree of 10 Apr. 1944, repr. in *KTB SKL*, pt. A, lvi. 220–1.

<sup>50</sup> Reproduced in the order of 242nd Inf. Div. NSFO of 11 July 1944 and Stellv.Gen.Kdo. VII. AK of 10 July 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IV/250, RH 15/88.

uniform political line to be followed. The 227 officers posted to the first course (147 from the army, 41 from the navy, and 39 from the Luftwaffe) were grouped into 19 working groups. This pattern was intended to ensure a deepening of what had been heard through guided discussions, independent development of subjects, and allow a better assessment of the participants. Two addresses by Gen. Reinecke, one for army officers by Gen. Schörner, 27 lectures, two ceremonial meetings, one of them on 'heroes' remembrance day' (12 March), meetings of the working groups, an extensive cultural framework programme in the evenings, with films, theatre, and music, as well as two 'social evenings' ruled out any boredom. Only one Sunday was left free for the participants.

The current military situation, including the occupation of Hungary on 19 March, was touched on officially only in the lecture by Lt.-Col. Ziervogel of the Wehrmacht operations staff. Ideological subjects dominated, even when not presented by the one of the Party contingent. The first course was also attended by Ruder, from the Party's National Socialist staff, as both a speaker and observer; he prepared a report for his chief Bormann.<sup>51</sup> From the Party's point of view the course was a success: the working group leaders assessed 83 per cent of the participants as being suitable for giving National Socialist guidance to the troops, and 30 per cent of them as above average.<sup>52</sup>

Whether the real objective of the course, the fanaticization of the officers, was attained it is impossible to tell from the available sources. At any rate, its programme and proceedings provided the basis for an only slightly amended pattern for subsequent courses, which in regular succession were held at Crössinsee until mid-January 1945. The number of lectures and days were reduced, the working group leaders were changed, and the personal record sheets of course participants amended. For a while Col. Dr Hübner, who has been mentioned several times before, was in charge of the courses, until—because of an erratic and offensive manner—he was relieved and made Gen. Reinecke's chief of staff. Beringer became responsible for personnel matters and was the Party's political 'watchdog' at Crössinsee. The events of 20 July naturally shifted the centre of gravity between Wehrmacht and Party clearly in favour of the NSDAP.

Beringer was also the author of the first official statistics on the courses. Prior to the attempt on Hitler's life seven of these had been held, with a total of 1,156 officers attending them. The overwhelming majority had been reserve officers; only 221 had been on the active list. Their average age was just under 38. Officers with denominational ties (667) outnumbered the believers with none (489). The ratio of Party membership among them was the other way

<sup>51</sup> BA NS 6/360, 23 Mar. 1944. Ruder himself was also the addressee of a report prepared by the head of education for the Gau of Westphalia-South (Bochum), Dr Krüger, on 17 Apr. 1944. He had led a working group at Crössinsee, *ibid.* On the programme for and proceedings of the course see BA-MA RW 6/v. 407, v. 587.

<sup>52</sup> In Krüger's working group only 40 per cent had not been Party members. On the other hand he thought the small number of 'early Party members [i.e. from before 1933] very striking'.

round: 850 against 314. The success rate of the seven courses—as was to be shown later, these were almost exactly one half of the total held—was similar to that of the first: only 16 per cent of the officers (390) were rejected as unsuitable, while 84 per cent were judged suitable for the intended political and ideological activation and fanaticization of the Wehrmacht. Just under 7.5 per cent were credited with the ability to be NSFOs in a higher-level staff.<sup>53</sup> Up to the cut-off date for these statistics it had not been possible to summon all full-time NSFOs of army groups, armies, and corps to Crössinsee to assess their suitability, as some of them were ‘indispensable’ because of the military situation.<sup>54</sup> From 20 March 1944 onward, i.e. in time for those completing the first selection course, there was also for all army NSFOs a personal aspect—out-of-turn promotion after six months’ successful service at the front instead of the usual twelve months.<sup>55</sup>

Germany’s military situation during the first six months of 1944 was not exactly favourable to the emergence of a ‘final victory’ mood. The Wehrmacht’s tactical concept was not to abandon an inch of the soil of ‘Fortress Europe’ without a fight. In this, the conduct of the war was to follow the principles of Ludendorff’s offensives in the spring of 1918; but the initiative had long ceased to be in the hands of the Wehrmacht. In January 1944 the Red Army along the entire eastern front, as well as the western Allies in Italy, renewed their activity. Neither did Germany succeed in ‘finishing off the business down there’—as Hitler called the American landing behind the Gustav line in the Anzio-Nettuno area; and no decisive defensive victory was scored against the Red Army that might have been used for raising morale at the front or at home.<sup>56</sup>

The battles of materiel in the east and south, together with the Allied bomber offensive against German industrial towns, were wearing down German nerves by both day and night. By contrast, an uneasy quiet reigned among the German troops in France, Norway, and in the Balkans. Militarily and mentally everything was focused on throwing the western Allies back into the sea wherever they might land, after which the deliberately weakened eastern front would be given back the forces it was lacking. The political and military leadership referred to this as being one of the decisive phases, if not indeed *the* decisive phase of the war.<sup>57</sup> Officially, the OKH passed a favourable

<sup>53</sup> Note by Beringer, BA NS 6/360.

<sup>54</sup> See memorandum by Beringer following a meeting with OKW/NSF on 3 Aug. 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> See the relevant HPA directives of 20 Mar. and 21 May 1944, BA-MA III H 233; also AOK 2, Mitteilungen f. d. NSFO, No. 7/1944, BA-MA RH 20-2/1375. This placed the NSFOs on an equal footing, in terms of personnel regulations, with the higher ADCs, and moreover with retroactive effect from 1 Jan. 1944. However, there was also criticism of the slow pace of proceedings at the HPA. See Beringer’s memorandum of 4 Aug. (n. 53).

<sup>56</sup> See Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xi, 12 Feb. 1944.

<sup>57</sup> One of the many comments was Dönitz’s order of 27 Mar. 1944 to his ‘U-boat men who have shown their mettle in the hardest fighting imaginable’, BA-MA RM 7/130; without the supplement of 11 Apr. 1944, publ. in *Deutschland im zweiten Weltkrieg*, v. 181; see also Jodl’s report to the Reich cabinet on 5 May 1944, BA-MA N 69/18, and Rahn in *Germany and the Second World War*, vi.

judgement on the morale of the troops on the eastern front. They were, it was felt, showing confidence and trust.<sup>58</sup>

Success or failure of National Socialist work depended not only on the operational situation, the location and structure of the units, but also on the personality of the unit commander concerned. It was clear, too, to those in charge that the front needed a different style of NS leadership from the replacement army. The spirits of the Wehrmacht (and with it those of the NSFOs) in France were plunged into a veritable alternating hot and cold bath during 1944. Thus while the 'Reichsleiter Rosenberg Action Staff' was still in April 1944 organizing a three-day lecture series for fifty divisional and regimental commanders from OB West's area, by mid-June the situation was completely different. By then lectures and general official phrases were no longer 'able to achieve anything at all. The men want not words, but real facts,' such as 'German planes in the air, and letters from home'. That, it was said, along with the personal example set by the officer, was the best National Socialist leadership.<sup>59</sup>

Yet in Field Marshal Kluge's opinion the strength of the troops to hold on was being tested to the limit. With the Allied carpet bombing they were 'facing a force against which there is nothing to be done'.<sup>60</sup> This assessment by OB West was confirmed by Lersner's unsparing report to the army's NS guidance staff of 4 July 1944. These quoted remarks by top officers 'of whose soldierly toughness and faith in the Führer there can be no doubt'; they no longer believed in a purely military solution of the war, but only in a political one. Lersner suggested that the hopelessness so evident from this pessimistic assessment of the situation should be countered with intensified ideological guidance. The principal task of National Socialist guidance at that time, he said, was to maintain and consolidate the men's faith 'that the outcome of the war depends on them not just indirectly, but directly, and that military successes are essential in order to have political success'.<sup>61</sup>

In the Luftwaffe the chief of Dept. VIII went one step further than Lersner. Maj.-Gen. von Rhoden recorded tersely in his war diary that the necessary understanding for the much-needed ideological guidance of the officer corps had not been present in either the acting chief of the general staff, or his predecessor.<sup>62</sup> He also criticized the National Socialist guidance staff. It was important to select 'soldierly personalities' with a solid training in history and

<sup>58</sup> Org.Abt., 9 July 1944, on the basis of comment by most army groups and armies on the situation reports of divisions on 1 June 1944, BA-MA RH 2/847a.

<sup>59</sup> OB West, NSFO, No. 12/44 of 1 July 1944, orders of the day from 1 Apr. to 30 June 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IV/149.

<sup>60</sup> Letter to Hitler, 21 July 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IX/8, repr. in Ose, *Entscheidung im Westen*, ann. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Lersner did also point out that important NSFO posts were either not filled at all (Army Group B) or not filled correctly (MilBfh and AOK 7), BA-MA RH 13/50.

<sup>62</sup> Entry for 1 July 1944. He was meaning Gen. Hans Jeschonnek and Gen. Karl Koller, BA-MA RL 2 IV/68.



ideology, and not older reserve officers because they were members of the Party.<sup>63</sup> Rhoden had defined the ideal type of Luftwaffe leader, with whom the real responsibility for National Socialist guidance lay, as early as the spring of 1944.<sup>64</sup>

The chief of staff of Air Fleet 3, Maj.-Gen. Hermann Plocher, at least, did try to lead the Luftwaffe troops in France ideologically and to render them crisis-proof with the help of National Socialist guidance. 'One thing is essential: inculcating the conviction that the struggle forced upon us must be seen through to the end, without faltering and by every single man.'<sup>65</sup> In this struggle the NSFO was defined as the exponent of the ideological defensive battle against the 'disruptive influence of enemy propaganda'. Unlike in 1918, 'we shall in this war come through the final quarter-hour!' In Italy, too, the Wehrmacht was suffering under the enemy's material superiority and its own lack of protection against his massive air attacks. At the beginning of June 1944 it had been forced to abandon Rome. After a three-week visit to the front, during which he addressed officers and men on twenty-two occasions, Lersner of the OKH/NSF also established that the 'means of ideological guidance and systematic strengthening of the men's will' had not been employed on the necessary scale. National Socialist guidance had almost totally confined itself to troop welfare, and done less to generate 'fighting feeling', to revive the spirits of the troops who had been 'grey with exhaustion'. Lersner saw one reason for the failure of National Socialist guidance, in the army group and the three armies, in picking the wrong people for it. None of the four NSFOs had had any practical experience, and had begun their work at their desks instead of by visiting the troops. As a result the latter had 'gone into the new heavy fighting [from mid-May] virtually without any proper National Socialist guidance'.<sup>66</sup> A few days later the commander-in-chief of the Tenth Army had to observe to his regret that some of the officers and men were no longer showing the fighting spirit 'that must be demanded of a German force'. Vietinghoff called on commanders to engage personally in ensuring 'that spirit for the fight is raised again, and the troops are restored to their full will to resist'.<sup>67</sup>

Gen. Walter Weiß too had to note, three days after the opening of the Soviet offensive against his Second Army, that in some places the work of the NSFOs had not permeated sufficiently down through the ranks, and was still bogged down in the organizing of entertainment and material welfare.

<sup>63</sup> Draft for report to Chef GenSt., 18 Oct. 1944, BA-MA RL 2 IV/1.

<sup>64</sup> See Ch. VII of this section.

<sup>65</sup> Air Fleet 3's NSFO of 30 June 1944, *re* orientation of the troops in the field of National Socialist leadership, BA-MA RL 7/154.

<sup>66</sup> Report of 9 June 1944, BA-MA RH 13/50. The NSFO of AOK 10 subsequently arrived at a different, positive, assessment of staffing. Order of the day, 8 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 20-10/265.

<sup>67</sup> Order of 17 June 1944, BA-MA RH 20-10/131. Lersner had also regarded it as the task of National Socialist guidance to reduce to a minimum the less than 10 per cent of 'weak and unstable men' who were shirking their soldierly duties.



National Socialist guidance, however, bore fruit only when 'every last man in the trench' was involved. The decisive thing was the personally spoken word. As the impending heavy fighting 'would demand the ultimate of outward and inward resistance from every soldier', Weiß demanded that the commanding officers, in particular, look to 'the successful shaping' of National Socialist guidance in their command, because that was their responsibility and not that of the NSFOs. 'Our objective is to educate every soldier to make him crisis-proof in any situation. *Every man a fortress!*'<sup>68</sup> Field Marshal Kluge on 20 July 1944 expressed it as follows: 'The task is to hold out, and when no remedy fundamentally improves our situation, then the task is to die decently on the field of battle!'<sup>69</sup>

Although he agreed on this objective with Weiß and Kluge, Schörner, the C-in-C Southern Ukraine, sounded a different ideological note in mid-June 1944. He wanted to tell his men *before* the 'onslaught of the Soviet flood' what they had to fight for, against, and how. The enemy's determination to annihilate the German nation demanded his men's total commitment. Because this attitude was not yet common among the troops, because there were still many just 'going along with the flow', Schörner called on his officers to educate 'even the last and most circumspect man to become a political soldier, that is to say a genuinely activist fighter'. A generation would have to be created that 'laughed at any bourgeois ideas of human dignity and at any tendency to go soft'. By the leaping flames of the summer solstice fire on 23 June 1944 they should all promise 'in this Asiatic war to overcome our simple-minded bonhomie and to draw from the destructive fire the strength to consume ourselves in merciless hatred of our enemies'. National Socialism should be the igniting spark; he defined its dynamic force as a weapon that lent 'pride and toughness, enabling [the soldiers] to make a supreme personal effort . . . With stronger nerves, a heart firm as iron, and an ultimate faith in the greatness and justice of our cause, we shall be victorious.'<sup>70</sup>

A few days later Schörner found himself in the role of a tactical instructor, passing on to the troops the experience gained by Army Group Centre of the Red Army's new methods of attack (a concentrated barrage, and the elimination of defending artillery from the air).<sup>71</sup> On the whole he regarded the endeavours made in the field of National Socialist guidance as having succeeded. 'We are on the right track, and we have made surprisingly good progress.' Nevertheless he urged his generals to lead their men politically every day, and to strengthen 'again and again their faith in victory and their trust in

<sup>68</sup> Directive of 27 June 1944 on National Socialist leadership, BA-MA RH 20-2/1375.

<sup>69</sup> Letter to Hitler, 21 July 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IX/8; repr. in Ose, *Entscheidung im Westen*, ann. 16.

<sup>70</sup> Special order No. 12 of 18 June 1944, *re* the midsummer festival 1944, BA-MA RH 19 V/98. On 4 June 1944 the OKH/NSF had drawn attention to that date, at the same time providing a wording to be used, BA-MA RW 6/v. 404.

<sup>71</sup> 1a directive of 26 June 1944, BA-MA RH 19 V/114.

the Führer'. The entire work of education should have the one slogan: 'We will and we must win the war.'<sup>72</sup>

Wherever the educational results desired by the command did not materialize, or where the troops actually 'failed', stern measures were taken. The commander of military district VII (Munich), for example, told his commanding officers that, in view of the increasing severity of the fighting, discipline at the fronts had reached a degree of rigour 'that, from a human point of view, in some instances often at first seems incomprehensible'.<sup>73</sup> Because of the well-recognized interdependence of motivation and discipline, indoctrination, welfare, and punishment, many reports, directives, and special orders contain both stimulating and deterrent measures.<sup>74</sup>

Unit commanders and army doctors were meanwhile also drawing attention to the constant overload on what was a disparate group of men. Once driven out of their positions it was difficult 'to get them to dig in again', especially where, after days of artillery fire and unremitting day and night attacks, and after bearing the rigours of the weather, they were physically and psychologically at the end of their tether. 'There even the officer with his pistol drawn was no longer able to do anything. The men simply could not go on.'<sup>75</sup> The fighting capacity and internal structure of the units were significantly impaired by the increasing lack of experienced officers and NCOs. But morale and attitude also suffered from the contrast that every soldier could see, 'between the shortage experienced at the front for a long time past of weapons and ammunition, and the plentiful production continually being talked about in the propaganda'.<sup>76</sup>

The top leadership's attention was repeatedly drawn to the differences seen in the divisions between experienced men and those being 'thrown into the fray', and between very old and quite young soldiers in the way they coped with tactical crises.<sup>77</sup> In autumn 1943 both the 1926 class had been called up for active service, and some of those born between 1889 and 1893 had been given their pre-conscription medicals. This enormous age difference resulted, for instance, in two divisions having an average age of 33 to 37. Special attention was paid in this context to the 1926 class. Already in late October 1943 the commander-in-chief of the Fifteenth Army, Gen. von Salmuth, had in a

<sup>72</sup> Personal letter to the generals, including divisional commanders, of 23 July 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Commanding officers' conference on 6-7 July 1944, BA-MA RH 53-7/680.

<sup>74</sup> On 'ruthless maintenance of discipline' see the directive of Army Group Narva (in Estonia) of 3 Mar. 1944, sgd. Frießner, and First Panzer Army of 19 Mar. 1944, sgd. Hube, as well as Army Group Southern Ukraine of 16 May 1944, sgd. Schörner, BA-MA RH 19 III/276 b, RH 24-59/112 and RH 19 V/114. Lersner, too, after his visit to the invasion front, had demanded that examples be made.

<sup>75</sup> Occurrence report from Fourth Army, 1 Feb. 1944, sgd. Heinrici, BA-MA RH 19 V/98.

<sup>76</sup> Situation report from Sixth Army, 20 Feb. 1944, sgd. Hollidt, repr. in Pflanz, 258. *Infanterie-division*, 292-3. Lersner, too, on 4 July 1944, drew the OKH's attention to the discrepancy between propaganda and reality.

<sup>77</sup> See Lersner's report of 4 July 1944, BA-MA RH 13/50, and Army Group C of 2 July 1944, BA-MA RH 19 X/29, as well as Tenth Army HQ of 15 July 1944, BA-MA RH 20-10/136.

message to the Wehrmacht operations staff referred to 'bunches of babes-in-arms' who had first of all to be trained into soldiers.

When the young recruits of the 1926 class failed to come up to expectations in battle, the causes were of course investigated. A revealing report from the eastern front—from the Fourth Panzer Army's sector—has survived. This had been written by Dr Wilke, a university medical lecturer acting as psychiatric consultant to the Army's chief medical officer, and approved by his superior.<sup>78</sup> Both doctors began by pointing out that the men's physical and mental 'maturity' was in keeping with the normal stage of development in a 17- or 18-year-old. Since at that age a single year's difference in age could be of 'fundamental importance', one should not expect from the 1926 age group the same concepts of comradeship, honour, discipline, and sense of responsibility as one would from slightly older men. All observers commended the keenness of the young recruits, their ready enthusiasm, and their dashingly offensive spirit, even in the face of tanks. These 'good' strengths however quickly diminished with prolonged combat—which was in line with the men's developmental age. With no pauses for rest, the young soldiers had shown 'an insuperable need for sleep, with an abnormal depth of sleep' and, regardless of tasks or orders, had put themselves in danger (e.g. from freezing to death). Dr Wilke also observed that military offences had been tried under martial law without adequate weight being given to the question of diminished culpability. Moreover, the severe punishments had served the purpose not so much of atonement for the actual guilt as of deterrence through fear. Both doctors pleaded for young soldiers not to be sent into action before they had passed their 19th year. The Wehrmacht high command did not take this suggestion up, but instead shortly afterwards called up the 1927 class for active service.<sup>79</sup>

In general, however, all field commanders and observers like Lersner had praise for the German soldiers in the 1944 year of the war: they would not let themselves be overcome that easily. That, as Salmuth said to Jodl, was 'the most gratifying aspect of all'. Needless to say, the troops were following events on the other fronts as well: the air war over Germany was a major strain on the nerves, and the men from East Prussia worried as the Red Army drew close to the Reich border.<sup>80</sup>

The picture of 'National Socialist guidance' during the first six months of 1944 would be incomplete without a glance at the many decentralized training conferences and courses ordered by the Wehrmacht services, high commands, and commanders-in-chief, for either the NSFOs, the officer corps, or the officer intake. 'National Socialist guidance' was not just someone's

<sup>78</sup> Report of 6 May 1944 with covering letter from the army medical officer of 6 June 1944, BA-MA RH 2/847a, H 20/485. During the four weeks of investigations Wilke had numerous conversations in five divisions (340, 349, 357, 359, 361) with unit commanders and their subordinates, as well as with medical officers of those units. He also visited dressing stations, recreation centres, and courts martial.

<sup>79</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 285, and *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 831.

<sup>80</sup> See the situation report from Tenth Army, *re* troop morale, BA-MA RH 20-10/136.

impractical brainchild—many field commanders took the task that ended up being imposed on them seriously, and tried to enhance the fighting power of their units by means of it. Although National Socialism had long been part of the syllabus in the war and weapons colleges of the various Wehrmacht services, the syllabus of the army's officer-intake training schools was adjusted to the new ideological guidelines. The goal of the 'guided instructional discussion' was the education of a candidate officer into a 'National Socialist fighter, cheerfully prepared to stake his life for the Führer and his National Socialist ideology'. At the same time the new officers should be given the ability, with this aim in mind, to give ideological teaching to soldiers and educate them politically.<sup>81</sup>

From the end of March to mid-June 1944, OKH/NSF organized central conferences for senior NSFOs. The same was done in the replacement army from 24 January to 4 February and 5–10 June 1944. Some armies brought their NSFOs together for separate training meetings.<sup>82</sup> Naturally the commanding officers in the military districts were also active in their own areas. There are, for instance, records of the fifteenth general schooling conference for officers and NSFOs in Berlin on 9 May, whereas Hamburg and Munich by the end of March had each held only their sixth conference. In the latter military district the commanding officer called for no empty blather, no phrasemongering, no philosophy of history, but work on ideological and character training. He urged his commanders: 'Don't raise any National Socialist hypocrites, no Pharisees, no smart alecks—just soldiers who live and fight according to their National Socialist faith and who know what they are dying for.'<sup>83</sup> For the general instruction of all officers on the meaning and purpose of National Socialist guidance, three-day conferences were held, in close collaboration with the Gau leadership of Munich-Upper Bavaria, at the new 'Seeburg' Gau training castle on the Starnberger See. In military district XI (Hanover) the replacement army likewise made use of a Party 'castle' for the indoctrination of the officer corps (18–19 July 1944 in Braunschweig-Querum).

For the 'intensified political and ideological schooling of the navy' various central courses were held in Kühlingsborn on the Baltic from September 1944 onward, both for commanding officers, commanders, and part-time NSFOs as well as for *Truppendienst* officers and leading civilian officials. The Luftwaffe, too, had two National Socialist guidance schools—one for commanding officers on the Oberjoch near Hindelang in southern Bavaria, and one for NSFOs in Grüngräbchen near Dresden.<sup>84</sup> A special case was the direct

<sup>81</sup> General inspectorate for officer training in the army, 25 June 1944, *re* form to be given to National Socialist instruction, BA NS 6/762. This authority had been established in March 1944. See the cadets' essays at a weapons school in the summer of 1944, BA-MA RH 17/v. 355.

<sup>82</sup> See that of Sixth Army in mid-May 1944, BA-MA RH 20-6/398, as well as the inauguration of Fourth Army's 'school castle' at Lyck on 9 Jan. 1945, BA-MA RH 20-4/623.

<sup>83</sup> Conference on 6–7 July 1944, BA-MA RH 53-7/680, 8–9. The C-in-C Sixth Army also wanted no 'unthinking cheer-leaders', BA-MA RH 20-6/418, 2 June 1944.

<sup>84</sup> See the report on the 22nd course at Grüngräbchen on 25 Jan. 1945, BA-MA RL 2 IV/246.

enquiry from the commandant of the formation leader school of Bomber Geschwader 101 to the Party's NS working staff whether a place might be reserved at each NSFO course in Crössinsee for one of his officers. And for himself, he requested Party Comrade Ruder to make it possible for him to take part in one of the senior courses at Sonthofen.<sup>85</sup>

One can certainly assume that the Party was not fully informed on all the activities of the Wehrmacht at its various levels and in various theatres of operations. That is the only way to explain Beringer's judgement that National Socialist guidance had 'got under way very slowly' in the Wehrmacht—for which he held mainly Gen. Reinecke responsible. It was typical of his incompetence, Beringer believed, that 'this elderly gentleman', who had last seen the front line thirty years before, had failed rapidly to exploit for the purposes of National Socialist guidance the events of 20 July.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> BA NS 6/360 (8 July 1944). A further example of willing adaptation is the promise made by the commanding officer of the 4th Flying (School) Division to Rosenberg following the latter's lecture on the 'War of Ideologies' at the commanding officers' conference on 11 Sept. 1944: 'We servicemen of the German Fighter Arm know what our goal is, and [will] stake our last ounce of strength for it', BA NS 8/174.

<sup>86</sup> Note for Ruder, 9 Dec. 1944, *ibid.*

## IX. The Totalness of National Socialism after 20 July 1944

THE attempt on Hitler's life clearly represents a turning point in the Second World War—and does so in several respects. For one thing, this was the first time in German military history that active and reserve officers had attempted to kill their supreme commander in order to enforce a political, moral, and military change of course. Outrage at the 'cowardly stab in the back' not only released hate-filled energies in the Party, for paying off old scores with the generals and general staff and for setting a bloody example; in the war's redoubled crisis the Party was determined rapidly also to realize political and ideological objectives that had until then been frustrated.

Faced with military defeat, the regime was planning a National Socialist future for the Reich, in which the measures initiated in the state, in society, and in the forces would at the same time make it possible to hold out longer in the present war. The aim was to educate and mobilize the Wehrmacht and the nation for 'total war'. Goebbels on 23 July 1944 observed that the situation should be put to advantage to bring about an 'internal war dictatorship' with 'the greatest possible effect on the war'.<sup>1</sup> Only now did the National Socialist regime dare make the transition to 'total war', structurally reshape the Wehrmacht into (in Himmler's words) a 'National Socialist people's army', fuse it with the Waffen-SS, restrict the military commander's executive power when defending the Reich in favour of the Gauleiter, and politicize penal and military law.

A further campaign of annihilation, this time against alleged traitors, no-hopers, and pests within the Aryan camp, was meant to prevent a second collapse like that in 1918. Himmler's 'military seizure of power'<sup>2</sup> in the Wehrmacht and in the army, Goebbels's organization of a total war effort, Speer's control of the material equipment of the Wehrmacht, the murderous reaction to resistance and apathy, as well as the measures in the field of ideological warfare that are the centre of our focus here, all served the single aim of coming through this seemingly hopeless phase of the war of attrition. This time, unlike in 1918, there was to be no giving up 'a quarter of an hour too soon'. The National Socialist conclusion drawn from the events of 20 July was 'Now more determined than ever!'

<sup>1</sup> Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, pt. 2, xiii, 23 July 1944; see Fröhlich, 'Hitler und Goebbels im Krisenjahr 1944', 207.

<sup>2</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 345 n. 177. This concept, strictly speaking, is just as incorrect as the National Socialist interpretation of 30 Jan. 1933. Neither Hitler (in 1933) nor Himmler (in 1944) had been acting under constitutional law. Both had their offices and powers handed to them—Hitler by Hindenburg, Himmler by Hitler. See Förster, 'Vom Führerheer der Republik'.

How Himmler, 'the unquestioning follower of the Führer', intended to fulfil his new educational remit as chief reformer of the Wehrmacht, presumptive commander-in-chief of the army, commander of the replacement army, chief of army armament, as well as commander-in-chief of the *Volksgrenadier* divisions, he explained to the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters in Posen on 3 August 1944.<sup>3</sup> It was clear to Himmler that the Wehrmacht could not have anything but a 'National Socialist stamp'; he was equally convinced that the armed forces were among the 'last organizations not yet imbued' with National Socialism. Himmler was not alone in this criticism of the military. But was it correct? What did 'imbued' mean? The military leadership had, over the past eleven years, made a great many attempts to implant the NSDAP's ideology in the Wehrmacht. In doing so it had had a free hand, even though at the beginning of 1939, in March 1941, and in January 1944 Hitler had redefined the direction and tempo of the ideological pervasion of the Wehrmacht.

After the 'dark day of 20 July' the Party at last saw its chance to 'imbue it with its ideology according to its own taste', and to 'educate it in that spirit'.<sup>4</sup> Himmler started at once to kindle the fire of a 'people's holy war' in the officer corps of the divisions under his command. Again and again in his many speeches to officers and NSFOs he threw the same ideology-soaked logs—honour, loyalty, obedience, comradeship, readiness for combat, diligence, fulfilment of duty, faith, and hardness towards oneself—onto the flames;<sup>5</sup> but they would not burn properly. After the devastating defeats in the east and west there was not enough dry timber left in Germany to feed the fire of enthusiasm. This simple fact could not be concealed even by the brief flare-up of outrage among the troops at the 'cowardly conspiracy' against their beloved Führer.

Hitler's ideological warfare after 20 July 1944 was marked by a twofold strategy. On the one hand he wanted to overcome the 'crisis in morale' by means of 'National Socialist guidance', and on the other to take his revenge. He entrusted his commander-in-chief of the 'German internal theatre of war', Himmler, with the latter task—the physical elimination of the 'scoundrels in soldiers' uniforms' who were responsible for the 'poisoning of wells' within the Wehrmacht.<sup>6</sup> As the new commander-in-chief of the replacement and *Volksgrenadier* division, the Reichsführer SS and Reich minister of the interior was also interested in permeating the army with the Nazi ideology, and doing so in the 'kindest' as well as the 'harshest way'. However, the first order issued by Himmler's chief of staff of the replacement army, SS-Obergruppenführer Jüttner, was more in line with the former of these alternatives. The work done so far in the field of National Socialist guidance was

<sup>3</sup> Repr. in Eschenburg, 'Die Rede Himmlers', 392, 394. Handwritten notes by Himmler, BA NS 19/4015.

<sup>4</sup> Eschenburg, 'Die Rede Himmlers', 394; see Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie'.

<sup>5</sup> See BA NS 19/4015 and BA-MA H 6/190, RH 53-7/v. 878.

<sup>6</sup> See *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, 246 ff. (31 July 1944), and Winfried Heinemann in the present volume.



expressly acknowledged, and commanding officers inside Germany were merely enjoined to continue their efforts 'to supply the field army not only with fighters well trained in using their weapons, but fighters for National Socialist ideology, most profoundly politically imbued with the meaning of the decisive struggle'.<sup>7</sup>

More effective than the accompanying request that commanding officers and unit commanders make the 'enormous events at the fronts'—in other words the devastating defeats—the start or finishing point of their political impact on the troops was probably the way 20 July was used, in the vocabulary employed and in the orders of the day, to breathe fresh life into the Hitler myth and with the desired effect in mind to narrow down the opposition to a 'quite small clique of ambitious, unscrupulous, and at the same time criminal, stupid officers'.<sup>8</sup> The Party should not allow itself to get carried away into 'attacking or insulting as a whole either the generals, the aristocracy, or the Wehrmacht services'.<sup>9</sup> Hitler was anxious that the will for combat and self-confidence of the troops should no longer be sapped by intemperate remarks from the Party, or let the impression gain ground that the collapse of Army Group Centre had been 'due to the traitorous action of senior field officers'.<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, not every soldier was fired with 'holy wrath and boundless fury' at the 'criminal attempt'<sup>11</sup>—as the navy commander-in-chief claimed—yet the Wehrmacht not only continued to fight bravely but also showed genuinely felt horror at the assassination attempt and evident relief at the miraculous 'salvation' of its supreme commander. Headquarters was virtually flooded with personal avowals of devotion from senior generals, as well as letters from simple soldiers. Many were truly convinced 'that boundless confidence and a strong inflexible faith in our Führer are needed for weathering this momentarily difficult time . . .'.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did Field Marshal von Weichs renew the oath of loyalty to Hitler for all the troops in the Balkans, but the chief of staff too called on all men of the Second Panzer Army to believe and to fight as Gen. Dietl (just killed in a plane crash) had done. From the sound of Hitler's voice and the contents of his funeral oration for Dietl they had 'felt his faith in the German officer and his personal warmth and loyalty to everyone who stands at his side'.<sup>13</sup> As a visible expression of their 'unassailable loyalty to the Führer' and their 'closing of

<sup>7</sup> BA-MA RH 14/12.

<sup>8</sup> Broadcast address by Hitler on 21 July 1944, in *Keesings Archiv der Gegenwart*, 6456; see his order of the day to the army of 21 July 1944, BA-MA RM 8/66.

<sup>9</sup> Telex message from Bormann, 24 July 1944, BA NS 8/190.

<sup>10</sup> First Army HQ, National Socialist guidance, 25 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IV/250, and XIV Panzer Corps HQ NSFO, 17 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 26-65/21, S. 6457. Gen. Reinhardt noted in his diary: 'Completely shattered. Unbelievable! What has this deed done to our officer class? We can only feel most deeply ashamed.' Entry for 21 July 1944, BA-MA N 245/3.

<sup>11</sup> Dönitz's address of 21 July 1944, in *Keesings Archiv der Gegenwart*, 6457.

<sup>12</sup> *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 154 (letter dated 1 Aug. 1944).

<sup>13</sup> Grolman's order of 21 July 1944, BA-MA RH 36/500.

ranks behind the National Socialist idea' the 'German salute' was introduced in the Wehrmacht on 23 July 1944. This replaced the military salute with the hand to the cap.<sup>14</sup>

Bormann's strictly confidential letter to Himmler on 22 July 1944 was a shot of a heavier calibre than Jüttner's decree of the day before, and moreover fired from under cover. In this the head of the Party chancellery proposed a number of far-reaching structural and thematic changes in the field of National Socialist guidance. The proposals had been developed by Pässe, the liaison man between Party and Wehrmacht. His authorship, however, was not to be revealed; instead Himmler was to 'evaluate [the proposals] himself'.<sup>15</sup> Bormann emphasized that the forming of a simple political will was now necessary 'in order to get through quickly to every single man'. General ideological schooling should be halted for the time being; the situation demanded a focus on main issues.

As an immediate measure Bormann proposed a 'instant' summoning of all NSFOs from the east and west, 'fanaticizing' them with talks from just one representative each from the Party and the Wehrmacht, and immediately sending them back to the troops. On 29 July 1944 the NSFOs of all the army groups and of several armies, plus fifteen from the replacement army and ten from the *Volksgrenadier* divisions, were gathered in the assembly rooms at the Führer's headquarters. The main speakers were Keitel and Himmler. Naturally the participants were also presented to Hitler, who shook hands with every NSFO. Apart from voicing his determination to direct the ideological training and education uniformly, Hitler confined himself to thanking Providence for his fortunate salvation. It would also 'give victory to whoever, come what may, holds high the flag and remains steadfast'. Anyone, however, who was not putting all his heart and soul into it would have to vanish, and 'anyone who does not want to do so, will be eradicated'.<sup>16</sup> The NSFOs already knew how Hitler saw the ideal type of National Socialist officer, as Hengl had ordered Hitler's funeral oration for Gen. Dietl to be distributed as early as 4 July 1944.<sup>17</sup>

Keitel essentially confined himself to an account of the situation, though he urged the NSFOs not to tolerate any criticism of the supreme command

<sup>14</sup> See Jacobsen, *1939–1945*, 482, doc. 139; Order of the day by Dönitz, BA-MA RM 8/66, and the joint decree by Keitel and Bormann of 26 Aug. 1944, *re* compulsory salute between Party and Wehrmacht, BA R 43 II/1194 b, and BA-MA RM 8/66.

<sup>15</sup> BA NS 19/750.

<sup>16</sup> Notes of the NSFO of Stellv.Gen.Kdo. VII. A.K. (Munich) of 1 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 53–7/v. 878; see Keitel's and Himmler's speeches, issued in excerpt to all officers of the Eighth Army in Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 20–8/238. Bormann had acted on Hitler's instruction after Speer had complained to the latter about the inadequate selection and leadership qualities of the NSFOs at Crössinsee. See *Deutschlands Rüstung*, 392. Schmundt erroneously mentions only Himmler as a speaker, see Schmundt, *Tätigkeitsbericht*. A DNB photo report of the beginning of August 1944 shows Hitler at the reception of NSFOs and mentions the participation of Keitel and Hengl, but not that of Himmler or Reinecke, BA picture 183–R 98380.

<sup>17</sup> Text with Hengl's covering letter, BA-MA RH 14/12, RW 6/v. 404.

and 'to strengthen faith in the leadership'. Keitel also took up Bormann's proposal of 22 July 1944 and promised the NSFOs that they would work directly to the commanders-in-chief or commanders, i.e. no longer answering to their chiefs of staff.<sup>18</sup> The NSFO 'should and must share the responsibility for ideological orientation'. He must not therefore let himself get involved in everyday demands: his one and only task was to strengthen morale in the forces. 'Now it is a matter of holding on and winning through. We have not lost the war, and we shall not lose it.'

Himmler's speech on 29 July was longer and more urgent than that of Hitler or Keitel.<sup>19</sup> He told the NSFOs what he had already told the staff of the replacement army and the officers of four divisions of the 29th wave: the task now was to reverse the 'shift in the fundamental values of soldiering' that had occurred since 1918, and to return to the principles that had supported Frederick the Great in the 'hard years' from 1761 to 1763—loyalty, obedience, comradeship, duty and diligence, truthfulness, and decency, as well as belief 'in the ideology of our blood and our race, and in the Führer'.

Himmler attributed the crisis on the eastern front mainly to a lack of fulfilment of duty and a lack of ideological orientation. Against a revolutionary adversary who sought to extinguish the German nation, only those divisions could stand up that had 'heart', energy, and brutality. The NSFOs must never despair or yield, but 'as the Führer's chosen corps [they must] be crisis-proof in the knowledge that we shall be victorious'. And would do so because of the law, written in the history of the world, of the superior genetic make-up of the Aryan race. At the end of his address Himmler reminded the selected gathering of NSFOs of what was worth fighting for, of 'what the war was about'—the confirmation of Greater Germany as a world power, the creation of a Greater Germanic Reich, and the reorganization of life in its military, economic, and ethnic aspects.<sup>20</sup>

On 29 July 1944 the new chief of the general staff, Guderian, made clear his attitude to the ideological orientation of the army following the attempt on Hitler's life. No doubt he was well aware of Hitler's profound dislike of

<sup>18</sup> Within the army the direct subordination of the NSFOs to the field commander—with regular information to the chief of staff or Ia—was ordered on 30 July 1944, BA-MA RH 20-2/1376, RH 19 IV/250. On 12 Aug. 1944 Keitel even drafted an order for a special reporting channel for the NSFOs.

<sup>19</sup> See the handwritten note of key phrases to use in his speech, BA NS 19/4015.

<sup>20</sup> Six months later Kaltenbrunner reported how Himmler 'got through' to the soldiers. He quoted from a letter home from a lieutenant and battalion adjutant on the southern front near Ravenna, dated 22 Sept. 1944: 'Three days ago we received a printed text of the speech by the Reichsführer of 26 July 1944 to a *Volksgrenadier* division in Bitsch. Our verdict? This is the best speech—apart from those of the Führer—that has been given in this war. If we had won the war after France, then it would never have been given and its spirit would have been stifled. If its spirit had triumphed at least after Stalingrad, then the invasion at Brest would have known a bloody end. That the speech has been given only after the failures started to show themselves is a good thing; then, after victory is won, the minds that want to carry on living in a "proper relationship" to National Socialism will be swept to where they belong—onto the dungheap.' Letter of 24 Jan. 1945, BA NS 19/3271.

lukewarm generals and intellectual general staff officers. In a basic order to all GS officers he demanded that each of them had to be a National Socialist guidance officer. By their exemplary attitude on political issues the general staff officers must show themselves and prove themselves as belonging to the 'cream of the best' every bit as much as they did in the field of tactics and strategy. Guderian expected each of them, without further delay, to avow their attitude publicly. 'Anyone failing to do so should apply for his release from the general staff.' He gave orders that in the assessment and selection of general staff officers the qualities of character and heart were to be given priority over those of intellect. 'A villain can be ever so cunning, but in the hour of need he will fail because he is a villain.'<sup>21</sup>

The new chief of the Luftwaffe general staff, too, demanded from his GS officers a special inner and outward attitude that would justify their claim to leadership. In addition to the Luftwaffe-specific demand that they form 'a closed-rank bloc' against any criticism from outside and 'stand at all times behind the Reich marshal as his most loyal men', Gen. Werner Kreipe proclaimed the motto: 'We want to be National Socialist officers not in words but in will, in thought, and in our hearts. Arrogant intellect and ice-cold calculation, on the other hand, are no instruments of leadership.'<sup>22</sup> Four days previously the navy commander-in-chief had once more made his uncompromising attitude clear. Capitulation was, for the German leadership, out of the question. In this 'bitterly serious battle for our destiny' there was only fanatical fighting and fanatical adherence to the man to whom the Wehrmacht had sworn loyalty. Any deviation from this, such as the army's general staff had just displayed, weakened the nation's will to resist, was a crime, and had 'to be mercilessly extirpated'.<sup>23</sup> This line was followed after 20 July 1944 by the chief of the navy personnel office, Rear-Adm. Martin Baltzer, who followed its spirit but not to the ultimate consequence. When a comrade wrote to him privately that the war would yet decide 'whether Adolf Hitler was a blessing for Germany and a misfortune for the British, Americans, and Russians, or whether he was a curse for Germany and a blessing' for the anti-Hitler coalition, Baltzer made it clear that every naval officer had to 'avow National Socialism from his innermost conviction'. Anyone not thinking so was either 'stupid or a criminal'. He warned his comrade, but did not betray him.<sup>24</sup> Even though Grand Adm. Dönitz still found 'morale in the navy' good in October 1944, he nevertheless urged his officers to continue to display inner unity, to declare themselves even more fanatically for the National Socialist state and the Führer, and to make unconditional sacrifices for the future well-being of

<sup>21</sup> BA-MA RH 15/179. As early as 24 Sept. 1942 Hitler had emphasized the need to educate the general staff 'to a fanatical belief in the idea' of National Socialism, repr. in Halder, *Diaries*, 670.

<sup>22</sup> Order of the day, 29 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RL 2 IV/63.

<sup>23</sup> Dönitz's address to senior commanding officers on 24 Aug. 1944, repr. in Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, ii. 640-8.

<sup>24</sup> Both letters repr. in Johannesson, *Offizier in kritischer Zeit*, 107.

the German nation. 'Our staunch endurance is militarily the only right thing, and politically what enables us alone actively to take advantage of the change in the political world picture.'<sup>25</sup>

The army personnel office similarly urgently reminded the army, the replacement army, and the military administration of the need 'to educate all soldiers even more than before in the National Socialist doctrine and world of ideas, and to fanaticize them for the National Socialist waging of war. Only a soldier politically schooled and militarily trained in this spirit will, even in critical situations and even in the case of unavoidable capture, stand by his oath of loyalty to the Führer, the nation, and the fatherland.'<sup>26</sup> While this last reminder was directed against the unwelcome effects of the National Committee for a 'Free Germany', Guderian once more reminded all army officers of the importance of their attitude in critical situations:

(a) Every officer is a delegate, a local representative of the Führer within his own sphere of command. Everywhere and at all times he should act as if the Führer were present. It is his duty to see to everything and to use every means to achieve the battle objective.

(b) An officer fights and falls at his post, but he never surrenders!<sup>27</sup>

The army's senior NSFOs, i.e. the NSFOs of the army groups, armies, and army corps, were brought together for a second time at Führer headquarters from 23 to 25 August 1944. There they were not only told in detail of what had happened on 20 July, and of the political ideas of the accused—the key phrases used being 'only a soldier' and 'apolitical officer'—but they were also sent off with rules for their behaviour. Alongside the sober general staff officer there must be the dashing NSFO, radiating faith and providing the backbone at times of crisis. Another main task was welfare and food supplies. While National Socialist guidance ranked on a par with tactical leadership, the NSFO should not be a *politruk*, even though 'Asiatic methods may at time have to be used in uncertain combat situations'.

Gen. von Hengl believed that the great bulk of the officer corps was already National Socialist,<sup>28</sup> with only a small percentage being 'secretly reactionary'. Although the crisis was not over, Guderian was, he said, well on the way 'to wresting the initiative back from the Russians again'. That was just as much a whitewash as was the remark that in the west the Wehrmacht was certain to put things right; it just had to hold on for another two or three

<sup>25</sup> Speech to the officers and senior officials of the navy high command on 11 Oct. 1944, BA NS 6/132. Bormann wrote in the margin: 'A good speech by our Dönitz, the speech of a man!', see Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 242; on 31 Jan. 1945 Dönitz argued similarly, BA-MA N 316/v. 29.

<sup>26</sup> OKH/HPA/Ag P2/Chefgruppe of 2 Aug. 1944, sgd. pp. the Führer, Burgdorf, BA Hohen-schönhausen, Film 1011, No. 00374 (Reich court martial, Prague).

<sup>27</sup> OKH/GenStdH/Ausb.Abt. (1a) of 27 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 24-51/108.

<sup>28</sup> Rass, *Menschenmaterial*, 122-4, established that one-third of the men of 253rd Inf. Div. were members of one or more Nazi organizations, with the National Socialist profile of the division being determined by the younger call-up classes (those after 1916).

months.<sup>29</sup> The Wehrmacht NSFOs were called on by Reinecke on 3 August 1944 not to provide instruction at this time, but to 'put all their effort into energizing and fanaticizing the troops to the utmost'. With 20 July 1944, 'the last opponents of a decisive politicization of the Wehrmacht [had been] eliminated'.<sup>30</sup>

Here then was the official basic framework for unit commanders and NSFOs to fill in. Although they did so in different ways, they were all guided by the idea that there must be no surrender in the face of Russian superiority, but that fighting must continue. In this ideological warfare it was in no way the case that the NSFOs gave the orders and their superiors 'often gave them strong backing';<sup>31</sup> the field commanders retained their prime responsibility for giving the orders in this area as well, while making use of the NSFOs. One form of exerting influence was orders of the day, proclamations, and appeals, while another was indirect situation briefing of the NSFOs in the lower-level commands of units and formations, as well as, in quiet sectors, lectures to the officer corps by senior Party functionaries.

If Zoepf believes that the orders of the day and appeals no longer had much to do with ideology,<sup>32</sup> then this is true only at a first, cursory glance. Social Darwinism, racism, and cultural chauvinism also characterized the appeals that were supposedly only about the German people's epic life-or-death struggle, the defence of the homeland, or the superiority of the German soldier as a fighter.<sup>33</sup> The order from the C-in-C Army Group Centre, Field Marshal Model, of 31 July 1944 may serve here as an example:<sup>34</sup> with the enemy now at the borders of East Prussia it was necessary, this insisted, for every soldier to be rock-steady, thinking only of the need of the hour: 'Now there is no more moving back!' Everyone must stake the utmost of his personal commitment, so as to keep murder, fire, and pillage away from German towns and villages. Everyone should remember his 'long superiority in fighting on the eastern front', which through three years defeated the Soviets or stood up to them inexorably 'in order to keep Bolshevism away from Germany. Are all our sacrifices to have been in vain?' The whole tenor of this order of the day prompts a clear 'No!', for the positive message followed in the form of a poem: 'Have faith in Germany's future, in the resurgence of your nation. Let no one rob you of this faith, despite all tribulation.' Model left no doubt that anyone no longer able to summon up that faith, anyone weakening, had forfeited his right to live. 'There is no room for cowards in our ranks.' He concluded with the demand: 'No soldier in the world can now be better than we soldiers of

<sup>29</sup> AOK Norway, NSFO, minutes of conference on 23–5 Aug. 1944, NOKW-3488; see Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 273, based on a Party memorandum.

<sup>30</sup> Repr. in Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Thus Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 272.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 273.

<sup>33</sup> For instance the commanding officer of Korpsabt. C, Lt.-Gen. Wolfgang Lange, hailed a local tactical success as a 'victory of morale over matériel', as a sign of the inner unity of a 'community of destiny between the leaders and the led'. Lange's address on 9 Aug. 1944, repr. in Lange, *Korpsabteilung C*, 122–4.

<sup>34</sup> BA-MA R 19 II/203.



our Führer Adolf Hitler! Heil to our beloved Führer!' Two and a half months later the men of Army Group Centre were given another hold-out order from Model's successor. It follows Model's not only in tone but in wording and contents.<sup>35</sup>

The general commanding LI Mountain Army Corps in Italy, when he called on his divisional commanders to keep in close touch with the fighting forces, referred less to Hitler and National Socialism than to general tactical aspects of the defensive fighting on the 'Green Line'. They were to use every opportunity for 'strengthening the troops' faith and confidence in a better future by appeals to them'. However, the Reich would be saved for them all only 'if every man, of his own accord and from his conviction of the absolute necessity of the final battle, does his duty'.<sup>36</sup> The 'deepening of National Socialist ideas' in his corps was served for Gen. Valentin Feurstein by the National Socialist guidance conference held in Reggio nell'Emilia on 16 November 1944.<sup>37</sup>

An example from the replacement army was the ideologically coloured speech by Lt.-Gen. von Hauenschild, in Potsdam on 1 October 1944, to guests and training officers from the panzer formations' warrant-officer and officer-cadet colleges. He felt the urgent need to speak about ideological education, and to answer his own question of 'what are we fighting for?' To Gen. Hauenschild the meaning of the war was 'keeping up our tradition still today, through keeping going, and taking further, the National Socialist German revolution'. He had no doubt that the 'young Europe of new revolutionary ideas and deeds' would be able to halt the onslaught of the 'men from the prairies of the west . . . and the masses from the steppes of the east'. Provided of course that the soldier broke with the old tradition of being 'apolitical' and became politically minded, that is to say convinced to the core by the National Socialist revolution. 'Total war and revolution' must begin right with the soldier's training and education. The need was not for administrative procedures and signatures in some office or other, 'but creative work, guidance, training, education as "spiritual procreation"—cultivation, but not of dwarf fruit!' Victorious peace would come only as a result of 'us willing victory . . . The Germanic Reich will be National Socialist, or it won't be at all.' What had happened on 20 July 1944 had 'released many forces, loosened many ties and inhibitions, dispelled many last misgivings . . . For the full realization of this our historic opportunity we officers are now placing the weapon of our ideology on an equal footing alongside our tanks, our rifles, and our machine-guns.' Hauenschild

<sup>35</sup> Order of 11 Oct. 1944, sgd. Col.-Gen. Reinhardt, BA-MA RH 19 II/204.

<sup>36</sup> Personal letter of 9 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 24-51/112; see the tactical proposals of the Ia of 29. Pz.Gren.Div., Lt.-Col. Josef Moll, of 26 Oct. 1944, for raising the combat value of the infantry in the sixth year of the war, BA-MA H 6/145. The directive for the training of the infantry of 11 Dec. 1944, BA-MA HDv. 130/1 E, as well as that for leading the Gren. Rgt. of 21 Mar. 1945, BA-MA HDv. 130/20, on the other hand stress the unity of education and training and the equal value of tactical and ideological leadership. The aim was to mould the troops into a politically inspired combat community. BA-MA RH 68/2, RHD 4.

<sup>37</sup> BA-MA RW 6/v. 275.



concluded his address with the vow: 'Therefore, my comrades, we consciously seek to be revolutionary National Socialist officers, officers of the Führer!'<sup>38</sup> With these words the old panzer general was echoing the call by his superiors in the replacement army for the entire officer corps to be the exponent of National Socialist guidance and educational work among the troops. In this task, priority was to be given to 'the deed, the example, and the officer corps's spoken and written avowal' of the Führer and National Socialist ideology.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time Hitler held 'the officers at all levels' in the west responsible for the waging of the combat being fanaticized and raised to the utmost degree of harshness. OB West was instructed to use instant and comprehensive draconian means to 'restore and maintain the steadfastness of the troops'.<sup>40</sup> Field Marshal von Rundstedt immediately implemented this order and employed his NSFOs—along with the military judiciary—as a tactical weapon to disseminate Hitler's view among the troops. Ultimately everyone was dealing with the defence of 'German soil'.<sup>41</sup> In order to get a grip on the problem of deteriorating morale in the west, among both the civilian population and the retreating soldiers, 200 NSFOs from all the Wehrmacht services had already been assembled towards the end of September 1944 for a special drive in military districts XII (Wiesbaden) and V (Stuttgart). While they were to operate by example and by talking so as to prevent 'psychological contamination' of the West Wall garrison and the replacement army, the chief of Field Gendarmerie Command III had been ordered to apply extreme ruthlessness, including the use of weapons, to halt the 'threatening collapse of war morale'.<sup>42</sup> The next special operation by NSFOs was in Upper Silesia: to start with, forty-nine especially suitable army officers from the 14th Crössinsee course were posted there.<sup>43</sup> The NSFOs of military districts III, VIII, X, XIII, and XVII also took part in the word-of-mouth propaganda campaign by the OKW's Wehrmacht propaganda department; this was designed between October 1944 and April 1945 to strengthen public confidence in the leadership and belief in victory in the cities of Berlin, Breslau, Hamburg, Nuremberg, and Vienna.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Copy, BA NS 6/137.

<sup>39</sup> Chef HRüst und BdE/Stab NSF of 18 Sept. 1944, sgd. Jüttner, Basic order No. 3, *re* use of all available staff for the task of National Socialist guidance in the replacement army, BA-MA NS 6/147.

<sup>40</sup> Führer order of 16 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RW 4/v. 494.

<sup>41</sup> ObWest/Ia of 16 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IV/56 D. See *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 633-4.

<sup>42</sup> See Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 279-80, and Hengl's report on a visit to the front, 15 Oct. 1944, BA NS 19/1858. See the interrogation by American officers on 27 Aug. 1945 of an NSFO taken prisoner at Metz, NA, RG 165, box 650. A good insight into efforts to influence morale and mood of the German formations in the west is provided by Rush, 'A Different Perspective'.

<sup>43</sup> Beringer's report of 19 Jan. 1945, BA NS 6/360, and the reports of NSFOs employed, NA, BDC, Film DS-JO 27. Gen. Reinhardt had sent his NSFO to the OKW and to Bormann at the beginning of Nov. 1944 to mediate in the dispute with Gauleiter Koch, BA-MA N 245/3.

<sup>44</sup> See *Das letzte halbe Jahr*, 19, 99, 110.

An example of the work done by the senior NSFOs is provided by the 'personal instruction' of the NSFOs of the Second Army by their own superior. Capt. Dickerhof explained to them that, strategically speaking, it did not now matter when and where the war was decided; what mattered was 'that the *final* decision is in our favour'. Their principal task was 'to get commanders, officers, and men away from their locally centred assessment of the situation, and to *put them in the big overall context*'. Only thus could they all find the necessary strength 'to believe in final victory despite the reverses'. He went on to give the NSFOs a picture of the situation and the general line to take in their work. What mattered was to see the general onslaught on 'Fortress Europe' through in 1944, regardless of losses. This would make it possible, once Hitler had restored the complete technical balance, to snatch back control of the war— thanks to the 'superiority of our National Socialist soldiery'. In order to reach this fifth and final phase of the war 'we National Socialist guidance officers must, with the fanatical and unflagging personal commitment that was shown before in the days of the Party's struggle, ensure that every officer and man "holds on"'.<sup>45</sup> Victory itself would compensate them for what cares every one of them had to take upon himself, and what sacrifices of blood he and his family had to make.

Commanding officers and NSFOs got down to their task of giving support and confidence to the troops engaged in heavy combat, even if the material sent to them from above seemed to them too 'extravagant' for use at the front.<sup>46</sup> Needless to say, example and spoken word were more effective than any written appeal, just as a lecture by the commander or unit leader was more effective than one from the NSFO. All officers came up against a barrier when speaking to men who did not understand, or only inadequately understood, German.<sup>47</sup> Admittedly, none of them could replace the psychological effect that an 'ordinary' victory over the Red Army or Allied forces would have had. But what was the fighting spirit of the Wehrmacht like? How did the high command assess the troops' attitude and morale? Were the efforts of the NSFOs to activate and fanaticize the troops crowned with success? Were they even accepted by the men?

An important source, intensively used by the top leadership, was the servicemen's letters home. Although we have no continuous body of field post censorship reports from the army groups, armies, panzer armies, and Wehrmacht commanders, the surviving monthly reports for August and September 1944, based on a large quantity of opened letters and a multiplicity of theatres of war, nevertheless provide a representative picture both of the mood and

<sup>45</sup> AOK 2, NSFO of 29 July 1944, BA-MA RH 20-2/1376; see also the orders of the general commanding LXII Reserve Corps and of the C-in-C Fifteenth Army of 27 July and 1 Oct. 1944, BA-MA RH 19 IV/250, RW 6/v. 404.

<sup>46</sup> See report of trip to Army Group South-West on 19 to 25 Oct. 1944. Repr. in both languages in Speer, 'Lavorare fino all'ultimo'.

<sup>47</sup> Examples of ethnic German or Italian soldiers, BA-MA RW 6/v. 275, RM 45 V/25 (8 Oct. 1944).

morale of the troops and of the impact National Socialist guidance was having. This was a special point looked for when evaluating them.<sup>48</sup> The general burden of the censors' reports was that remarks about the 'educational, political, or ideological instruction [were] exceedingly rare in the letters'.<sup>49</sup> In another army the official in charge had, when examining 27,500 letters home during the same month, found only two that dealt with the work of the NSFO.<sup>50</sup> Those responsible were asking themselves whether this was due to apathetic soldiers or incompetent educators. As it was impossible to gauge from the letters examined how the political guidance work of commanders and NSFOs had been received by the troops, recourse was had to indirect evidence: 'The presumption may therefore be made that the effect is favourable, since the predominantly optimistic and confident comments on the war situation and the positive political stance of many letter-writers where the Bolshevik system is concerned suggest a certain degree of schooling.'<sup>51</sup>

In Army Group E in the Balkans the method of indirect evaluation was described as follows: 'The influence of political schooling by the NSFOs, although direct comments about it are rare and mostly not positive, seems nevertheless to be favourable, as may be judged from the regularity of the basic tone of most letters that comment at all on the situation.'<sup>52</sup> The two censorship officers of the Third Panzer Army and Army Group A similarly made things easy for themselves: while the former concluded that the exemplary morale suggested 'a high-level, variegated body of ideas in terms of morale and fighting spirit', one that, from a personal and ideological viewpoint, was totally congruent with National Socialist ideas, the latter stated simply that the National Socialist schooling of the troops was good, as emerged from all letters. This simplification was apparent even in Gen. Hengl's headquarters.<sup>53</sup> At least OKH/NSF was able to discover from a letter from Army Group E that an intensified schooling had started among the troops, 'as was badly needed by so many'. Except that it would take a long time before the soil had absorbed enough manure to produce fruit.<sup>54</sup> However, this positive comment could not conceal from the military leadership that many soldiers had still not understood the real function of the NSFOs, because in their letters they referred to

<sup>48</sup> BA-MA RH 13/48, RH 13/49; AOK 10, order of the day of the NSFO for July 1944, BA-MA RH 20-10/265. Speer, on the other hand, thought it more proper for 'the NS guidance people' to investigate the troops' morale in person, by 'visits to the very front line and in informal discussion with the men in their positions', Letter to Hengl of 18 Oct. 1944, BA R 3/1582.

<sup>49</sup> Army Group Wöhler, field post letter of 1 Sept. 1944, activity report for August 1944, BA-MA RH 13/48.

<sup>50</sup> Army Group Heinrici, field post examiner, 6 Sept. 1944, *ibid.* The same result was found in the Twentieth Mountain Army and in the First Army.

<sup>51</sup> Army Group Southern Ukraine, field post examiner, 1 Sept. 1944, *ibid.* Almost identical was the assessment a month later, BA-MA RH 13/49.

<sup>52</sup> Report of 1 Sept. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/48.

<sup>53</sup> PzAOK 3 of 2 Oct. 1944 and H.Gr. A, FPP of 1 Oct. 1944, *ibid.* The latter had examined mail from German soldiers under the command of the plenipotentiary general of the German Wehrmacht in Hungary.

<sup>54</sup> Letter of 6 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/48.

'National Socialist welfare officers'.<sup>55</sup> 'More lively and more positive' comment than on the work of the NSFOs was, in the judgement of Fourth Army, their reaction to lectures by unit commanders known to them. Occasional recurrent phrases, such as 'We'll get there'<sup>56</sup> or on the 'need to hold out, and about the danger of Bolshevism',<sup>57</sup> were, in the view of the examiners, an indication of the effect of propaganda.

A lieutenant in encircled Lorient did not think much of slogans. Propaganda, he believed, was 'right and good if it paints the obstacle to be overcome and the enemy to be defeated in an unemotional and straightforward way, and then brings the combative spirit and idealism to the boil so as to lend heroic drive to material strength'.<sup>58</sup> In all the gigantic mass of letters sent home between August and September 1944 only once did the military leadership learn something about the effect of a NSFO course at Crössinsee. Admittedly, this lieutenant did not have to be convinced of the importance of National Socialist ideology, for he reported to his wife 'an atmosphere like that during [the Party's] time of struggle' and a 'brushing-up of National Socialist facts'. He was returning to the troops 'hardened' and would see to it 'that the final battle is waged just as doggedly as up to now . . . and that our hated enemy is not presented with a cheap victory'.<sup>59</sup>

The field post examiners at the command headquarters were concerned less with National Socialist guidance than with attitude and morale, both at the front and at home. There was a need now to analyse and evaluate the effects of the severe psychological strain the troops were under due to Germany's extremely tense political and military situation in the north, west, south, and east, as well as on the home front.<sup>60</sup> Two factors played a particular role in this—the fact that the front had reached the Reich's borders, and the Allied air raids. Towards the end of September 1944 the end to the war was 'longed for more ardently than ever, and the hope of the new weapons' was for many soldiers the only hope they could cling to: 'They can turn things round.' Many others saw the situation more realistically and more soberly, but did not think of giving up but rather of doing their duty as soldiers in defending the homeland. Yet there were still young, healthy 'idealists' anxious to leave quiet Norway to join the fighting troops, either to annihilate 'Tommy' or to 'liberate [the fatherland] from the Red liberators'.<sup>61</sup> While some already saw the war as lost, using the words 'final victory' sarcastically in their letters, others showed themselves hard, determined to fight on, and confident, urging their relations

<sup>55</sup> See the censorship report of AOK 16 of 1 Sept. 1944, *ibid.* For those affected by bomb damage, however, the NSFO as a contact point and distributor of the relevant paperwork was of primary importance.

<sup>56</sup> Report of 1 Oct. 1944, 4–5, BA-MA RH 13/49.

<sup>57</sup> AOK 20, field post examiner's report of 30 Sept. 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*, 154 (4 Aug. 1944).

<sup>59</sup> AOK 10, report of 1 Oct. 1944, BA-MA RH 13/49.

<sup>60</sup> BA-MA RH 13/49.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 183 (WB Norway).

to remain steadfast. Several things struck the examiners: the firmer attitude by the officers, a 'trend towards religiousness', and the exemption of Hitler's person from criticism of the Party ('On the other hand, no voice was raised against the Führer').

It is impossible to gain any uniform historical picture from the hundreds of thousands of field post letters that were examined. While one army (the First Panzer) for the first time described morale as bad throughout, another (Seventh Army) described it as good and further consolidated, while a third pointed out that SS men were 'displaying a positive, optimistic assessment of the situation in spite of seeing frequent action at hotspots and in spite of taking considerable casualties'.<sup>62</sup> Two examiners took the trouble to quantify the letters with regard to morale and attitude at the front and at home. This showed that in the Fourteenth Army (over 38,000 items of mail) 2 per cent of the letter-writers expressed 'their unconditional faith in final victory and in the Führer', 5.5 per cent were hoping for victory, while about 8 per cent described themselves as 'absolutely war-weary', and about 7 per cent were 'pretty surely longing' for an early end to the war.<sup>63</sup>

Fourth Army headquarters (over 25,000 letters) was unable to report any uniform picture to its superiors. While positive attitudes rose from 4 to 5.5 per cent, negative ones did so too from 1.4 to 1.6 per cent, and apathetic ones from 3.1 to 5.6 per cent. Whereas in three divisions the increase in positive comments matched the diminution of negative ones, the two remaining divisions reflected only a negative trend: a decline of positive and an increase of negative attitudes. The Fourth Army was also unable to find any significant difference between the attitude and morale of the front-line units and those in the rear areas.<sup>64</sup>

The vast bulk of letter-writers in both armies were concerned with private or other matters. This was also the conclusion of the Second Army's examiner (over 41,500 items of mail): 70 to 80 per cent of the letters were not concerned with 'the great issues of our time', some perhaps deliberately so but many more from indifference or a lack of understanding. 'Only 2 per cent of all letters are more or less negative, about 10 per cent are apathetic or worried, and about 10 per cent unflaggingly confident.'<sup>65</sup> Two months later the NSFO of the Nineteenth Army reported, on similar lines, that morale in the forces was with few exceptions good, though the troops were at the end of their strength through 'physical (the wet and the mountains) and psychological (artillery barrages, and the enemy's air and tank superiority) stress'; these had continued without pause since August.<sup>66</sup>

Needless to say, the central NSFO courses at Crössinsee continued, in fact until mid-January 1945. After an interruption and relocation to the west, the last course ended on 17 April 1945 in the Olympic village outside Berlin.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 165 (Ninth Army).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 87.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 113, 114.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 202.

<sup>66</sup> C-in-C Nineteenth Army to WFSt and HPA, 28 Nov. 1944, repr. in Jacobsen, 1939–1945, doc. 153; See *KTb OKW*, iv/1. 30.

While one officer, after being posted as a divisional NSFO, was uncertain whether he would be able to cope with this difficult task, another, a young general staff officer, was looking forward to the (10th) course, where he would learn something new since 'the people there are doing their utmost to teach us'.<sup>67</sup> Although in the past there had almost always been general staff officers among the participants,<sup>68</sup> the 12th course (on 16–29 Nov. 1944) took a new path, one that was to prove a once-only: the current general staff course at the Hirschberg War Academy (182) was switched to Crössinsee, along with its instructors (18). This was bound to end in failure, since there were prejudices on both sides that inevitably resulted in misunderstandings, even though none of them wanted to lose the war. Beringer's official report to the Party chancellery criticized the 'cold, calculating intellect' of the leadership trainees and the 'powerful alienation of former Hitler Youth leaders by the Academy's educational system'.<sup>69</sup>

The report from the commandant of the War Academy, Gen. Hans Speth, for the chief of the army general staff spoke instead of a 'certain mental fatigue' due to too many lectures, and of a 'splitting apart of opposites' by the clumsy way '20 July' was dealt with—a reference to Eckhardt, the Party's man, and Gen. Reinecke. Speth, no doubt aware of the Party's criticism, took the side of his officers, 'in most instances wounded several times . . . who had given proof of their National Socialist attitude and dedication to the Führer and nation in practice'.<sup>70</sup> As a whole, Speth regarded the course as a complete success as its purpose, to activate the general staff officers politically and ideologically, had been achieved. Indeed he suggested to Ruder that every general staff course should in future be opened with a NSFO course. In addition to Crössinsee there was a further National Socialist guidance school from January 1945 onwards, at Dallund (Denmark). In addition the Wehrmacht services each maintained their own schooling institutions for National Socialist guidance in Egendorf and Schierke (army), Kühlungsborn, later Bernau (navy), and Oberjoch and Grüngräbchen (Luftwaffe).

The replacement army was not inactive either, as its chief of staff Jüttner had issued a further basic order on 14 October 1944. 'The officer corps [was to be] moved out from the level of dealing with apolitical weapons craft, and every officer [turned] towards the political and soldierly leadership of men.' In transmitting knowledge the themes of 'racial theory' and 'German socialism' were to take the foreground. From an officer corps schooled in this way 'the

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Maj. D. to his wife of 16 Oct. 1944 (in private ownership). While eight general staff officers were found suitable for NS guidance, this active officer was judged by the course management to be apolitical and unsuitable.

<sup>68</sup> See Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 96–7.  
<sup>69</sup> BA NS 6/759 (30 Nov. 1944). Because of the 'regal presentations' and the 'attitude of the Hirschberg people', Bormann gave instructions for the report to be submitted to Himmler. See Beringer's interim report of 18 Nov. 1944, BA NS 6/360. On National Socialist guidance at the Kriegsakademie Hirschberg in January 1945 see Knappe, *Soldat*, 290–1, 295.

<sup>70</sup> Carbon copy of the report of 30 Nov. 1944, BA NS 6/759. Twelve officers had been awarded the Knight's Cross and twenty the German Cross in Gold.



forces and ideas [should] grow' that would 'ideologically fanaticize and activate the men'.<sup>71</sup> Four months later the senior NSFO of the replacement army gave orders for the training of weapons instructors from among the NCO corps and other ranks, in order to relieve the officer corps of this and enable ideological education to be 'deepened in conversation in the men's quarters'.<sup>72</sup>

Something was also being done on the ideological front for the new intakes of officers and NCOs. National Socialist guidance courses had been running at the war colleges ever since the spring of 1944, but the appointment of an 'Inspector-General of New Officer Intake', Maj.-Gen. Vollrath von Hellermann, brought a fresh, ideological drive to educational work. His idea was to develop National Socialism, 'through the best of our nation's youth, into the strongest inward force' in German history. Faith, knowledge, and energy were to be fused into one in the young leaders. Alongside a clear ideological avowal and education to absolute hardness towards oneself was the tactical need for a focused will to annihilate the hated enemy, a will that the cadet had to prove, for instance, in prowess as a sniper. 'Only he who has inwardly understood what is really at stake will fight for it with all his strength, but only if he is also hardened and assured in his beliefs can he truly prevail.' If, in a young officer, the fighting front receives 'an impassioned, believing, and confessing National Socialist of deed and ability', then the army's cadet schools would have made their contribution to the National Socialist revolution.<sup>73</sup> Similar directives for the army's NCO schools were issued on 12 February 1945, to shape the NCOs too into National Socialist leader personalities.<sup>74</sup>

After a year of National Socialist guidance the Wehrmacht and the Party reviewed their work. While the Wehrmacht presented a purely statistical analysis,<sup>75</sup> the Party chancellery commented on the substance of the personnel output from Crössinsee Order Castle, the Reich's spiritual 'armament establishment' that shared in deciding the outcome of the war.<sup>76</sup> The Party did not arrive at a uniform assessment. On the one hand it assigned historic significance to the change that had taken place in the internal structure of the Wehrmacht,<sup>77</sup> while on the other it remarked critically that, despite Hitler's order of 22 December 1944, there was still no 'clear chain of command or method of command' in the field of National Socialist guidance work. Nevertheless Ruder assessed the work done over the past year as 'entirely positive'.<sup>78</sup> It could be assumed, the Party chancellery's report concluded, that 'without

<sup>71</sup> BA NS 6/147.

<sup>72</sup> ObdE, Abt. NSF of 9 Feb. 1945, sgd. Lindenberg, BA NS 6/137 and BA-MA RW 15/88.

<sup>73</sup> Order of 12 Jan. 1944 *re* NS guidance and education, BA NS 6/139. The Party had been involved in the drafting of this instruction. On the training of the Luftwaffe see n. 82.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> NS-Führungsstab, Abt. 3 (Pers) of 31 Dec. 1944, sgd. Ihler, BA NS 6/360, repr. in Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 207–8.

<sup>76</sup> Beringer in his report of 9 Dec. 1944, BA NS 6/360.

<sup>77</sup> Report on the 13 courses in 1944 at Crössinsee, n.d. [probably 20 Dec. 1944], BA NS 6/782.

<sup>78</sup> Ruder's observations at the working conference of Gruppe II F 2 Nov. 1944, *ibid.*



National Socialist guidance' the will to resist and fighting spirit at the front 'would long since have yielded to despondency that had it developed further could have led to collapse'.<sup>79</sup>

While the army was credited by the other Wehrmacht services with systematic work and having a sizeable lead, and while in the navy 'a fresh wind' could at least be felt to be blowing, National Socialist guidance in the Luftwaffe was still far behind: 'Clear planning and systematic approach are lacking here.'<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the Party wanted to leave the political activation of the forces with the Wehrmacht as before, and not be seen to be involved; it would exert influence only 'at the top', and lead from there. In November 1944 Ruder still believed that the NSFO was not the decisive man for bringing the 'new spirit' to the troops, but the 'National Socialist field commander'.<sup>81</sup> In mid-February 1945 Göring saw matters in much the same light. Having conceded that the Führer's order of 22 December 1944 had not yet become 'common currency' among commanding officers and unit commanders in the Luftwaffe, he now expected his senior officers to be unreservedly convinced and unshakeable National Socialists in their loyalty and devotion to Hitler. Anticipating the Führer order of 13 March 1945, the Luftwaffe C-in-C assigned to the NSFOs the same essential position and importance as his Ia officers. The credo was: 'The Wehrmacht is the sword-arm of the Führer's movement', the sole bearer of 'totality in our people's state'.<sup>82</sup> Yet appeals alone were no longer able to affect the real situation of the Luftwaffe. A large number of unit commanders and NSFOs were, either technically or politically, not at all up to the job they had been given.<sup>83</sup>

The central NSFO courses in Crössinsee (fourteen in all) had by mid-January 1945 been attended by 2,693 officers, medical officers, and officials from all the Wehrmacht services.<sup>84</sup> Just under 68 per cent of them (1,825) had been found suitable for full- or part-time employment as NSFOs.<sup>85</sup> Of the nearly 2,700 participants 72 per cent were Party members, and 61 per cent had already been working as NSFOs. At that time the Wehrmacht had altogether 1,251 senior NSFO posts; by the end of December 1944 at least 86 per cent (1,074) of these were filled. The number of part-time NSFOs was given by the Wehrmacht high command as about 47,332. While nearly one-half of all senior NSFOs had

<sup>79</sup> See n. 77, pp. 5–6. This view was supported by Maj.-Gen. (retd.) Rudolf von Xylander who, in the September 1944 issue of *Militärwissenschaftliche Mitteilungen*, said that the Allies had underrated the 'psychological and morale strengths of the German soldier'.

<sup>80</sup> This view was shared by the Luftwaffe itself. See n. 82.

<sup>81</sup> Ruder's remarks on 2 Nov. 1944, BA NS 6/782.

<sup>82</sup> Reich marshal order No. 14 of 17 Feb. 1945, BA-MA RL 1/4; see the order of C-in-C Air Fleet Reich of 6 Jan. 1945, BA-MA RL 33/80, the basic training plan for the eight-week recruit training in the Luftwaffe of 16 Feb. 1945, BA-MA RL 2 II/279, as well as 'Leitfaden für Wehrwesen' of 29 Mar. 1945, BA-MA RL 2 II/177.

<sup>83</sup> See the unsparing report by Maj.-Gen. Bloem on his study trip to I Fighter Corps, 13 Mar. 1945, BA-MA RL 2 IV/69.

<sup>84</sup> OKW statistics on the 13 courses and the 14th course from 17 Jan. 1945, BA NS 6/750.

<sup>85</sup> 192 general staff officers had not been assessed.

passed through Crössinsee, that target had nowhere been reached for the part-timers (barely 2.4 per cent).<sup>86</sup> The total of those who had gone through a internal course in one of the Wehrmacht services cannot be established.

In line with its plan of engaging itself 'at the top', the Party managed to get the leading figures on the army, navy, and Luftwaffe National Socialist guidance staffs who still came from the days of military-ideological guidance—Radke and Lersner, Hüffmeier and Fölkersamb—removed. Even the fact that the commander-in-chief of Army Group G, Gen. Balck, who enjoyed great respect from Hitler, interceded on Lersner's behalf did little to help him. Gen. Reinecke, on the other hand, succeeded in holding on, even though Ruder in mid-February 1945 described him as a 'total failure' and Keitel, four weeks later, even informed him that he was dissolving the Wehrmacht National Socialist guidance staff.<sup>87</sup> The Party did not succeed in really drawing an organizational 'final line' under the radical ideological reorganization of the Wehrmacht. The Führer order issued for this on 13 March 1945 was held back;<sup>88</sup> supreme supervision by the Party over the ideological guidance of the Wehrmacht, along with a special NSFO channel of reporting, were not institutionalized.<sup>89</sup>

The breakthrough from the NSFO to a Soviet-style commissar failed, as the Party chancellery noted, in the face of 'counter-currents in the Führer's headquarters'.<sup>90</sup> The commanders-in-chief of the army, navy, and Luftwaffe continued to be responsible for using National Socialist ideology as the 'most powerful means of struggle' in Germany's hard fight for victory. For Hitler as C-in-C of the army, Gen. Hengl took on this task, though on 21 April 1945 he was appointed 'C-in-C Alpine Front North-West'. However, there was no dissent between Party and Wehrmacht; both sides, when it came down to it, favoured the militant, fanatical Nazi unit commander who made use of his NSFO to get the stronger political awareness and fighting morale he wanted in his troops.<sup>91</sup>

This was not an easy task. Now that the euphoria in the West had evaporated and the Red Army was advancing unstoppably, there were no positive signals left to be set except the call to defend the homeland. The pictures of the horrors of an Allied victory were painted on the propaganda wall ever more starkly. Anyone unwilling to see the resulting necessity to fight on, or anyone quite simply too exhausted, was mercilessly persecuted. It had simply not been possible to keep the enemy's armies of millions away from the Reich's borders 'until a peace safeguarding Germany's future [was] ensured',

<sup>86</sup> Statistics of 31 Dec. 1944, BA NS 6/360, publ. in Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 207–8.

<sup>87</sup> See Ruder's memos for Bormann of 16 Feb. and 19 Mar. 1945, BA NS 6/144.

<sup>88</sup> Publ. in Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 14.

<sup>89</sup> See Walkenhorst's memo, 10 Apr. 1945, BA NS 6/144, and Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*, 359ff.

<sup>90</sup> Memo for Walkenhorst of 4 Apr. 1945, repr. in Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFOs', doc. 15.

<sup>91</sup> See the 'Vertrauliche Nachrichten des NS-Führungsstabes' of the navy of 18 Nov. 1944 to 13 Mar. 1945, BA-MA PG 16651, box 169, as well as the battle slogans of 9. Fl.Div. of 25 Mar. 1945. BA-MA RL 10/109.

as had been declared as recently as 18 October 1944 at the creation of the *Volkssturm*.<sup>92</sup>

As the Red Army was preparing for its final thrust into the heart of the Reich, Hitler once more appealed to his 'eastern fighters' to form a 'sworn band of brothers'. Steadfastness and fanaticism were to stifle the onslaught of the 'Jewish-Bolshevik arch-enemy' in a blood bath on the Oder. His vividly ideologically coloured order of the day of 15 April 1945 ended with the pithy slogan: 'Berlin remains German, Vienna becomes German again, and Europe will never be Russian!'<sup>93</sup> Time and again Prussia's disastrous situation in the final year of the Seven Years War was trotted out as a historical parallel showing that there was every reason to hold out in a 'struggle of destiny' against unstable war alliances. When even the death of President Roosevelt failed to provide the hoped-for 'turning point in the war', when all the bravery of the soldiers and SS men as well as that of 'children and old men' on a wide variety of fronts proved unavailing, and when even old comrades-in-arms like Himmler and Göring were no longer prepared to follow him unconditionally, Hitler took his own life on 30 April 1945.

However, the ideological and tactical war continued.<sup>94</sup> Even though many generals had been looking on the war as lost since the Rhine and the Oder had been crossed, they had not dared, before Hitler's death, to act politically lest they encourage a repetition of the 1918 legend of the stab in the back. At the same time they seriously believed that Hitler must 'have something up his sleeve', and so continued to carry out tactical orders even if they doubted these had any purpose.<sup>95</sup> Although by 1945 the troops were 'generally fed to the back teeth' with the war,<sup>96</sup> they still carried on holding on. The number of offences such as absence without leave, desertion, cowardice, or looting, was—according to a report by Field Gendarmerie HQ II on 22 March 1945—'not exceptional given the numbers of the troops in combat and considering the military situation'.<sup>97</sup>

Although neither the Wehrmacht nor the civilian population showed any signs of collapse, commanding officers and senior SS and police officers, as well as the 'flying courts martial', resorted to the harshest measures. On 15 April 1945 the 'supreme judicial authority' of the National Socialist regime and its sword arm openly authorized soldiers 'immediately to put down' any officer ordering them to retreat.<sup>98</sup> Hitler's orders to shoot were influenced more by

<sup>92</sup> See Yelton, 'Ein Volk steht auf'.

<sup>93</sup> *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung*, 311; see Hitler's order of the day on the turn of 1944/5, BA-MA RW 6/v. 275.

<sup>94</sup> The connection between the two was made clear by the order of the officer commanding 114. Jg.Div. of 23 Jan. 1945, BA-MA RH 26-114/36.

<sup>95</sup> See Förster, 'Die Niederlage der Wehrmacht', 98. Examples of such attitudes were Generals Vietinghoff and Balck.

<sup>96</sup> Report of OB West, 7 Feb. 1945, *KTB OKW*, iv/2. 1364.

<sup>97</sup> VHA Prague, monthly return for February 1945. Almost 136,000 men of the Wehrmacht were involved, and nearly 200 cases dealt with; 46 death sentences were carried out.

<sup>98</sup> *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung*.

the trauma of 1918 than by the reality of 1945. Dönitz, at any rate, believed that the unity of the *Volkgemeinschaft*—despite the total military collapse—was a success of National Socialism. Unlike in 1918, the German nation in 1945 was ‘still not ripped apart’.<sup>99</sup>

The crucial question of what the direct effect was of the ‘endurance serum known as the National Socialist spirit’ and of repressive measures on one’s own people is easier to ask than to answer. It exercised the minds of the American intelligence service and of the German generals who, later commissioned to do so by the Americans, reflected on why ‘the German soldier in a hopeless situation had nevertheless fought the 1939 to 1945 war through to the end’.<sup>100</sup> Contrary to the British military author Liddell Hart, their judgement was not unanimous. While Gen. Blumentritt did not think the German infantry of 1939–45 had been as good as that of 1914–18, and not as steadfast under fire, disciplined, or obedient to orders, Gen. Otto Elfeldt looked at both the discipline and the morale of the troops. In 1917/18 morale had suffered through the spread of socialist-pacifist ideas. ‘In this war National Socialism had the opposite effect—it strengthened morale.’ It had made the men more fanatical—‘which was both good and bad for discipline . . . The rank-and-file showed more initiative and used their heads better than in the last war, especially when they had to depend on themselves in battle or were fighting in small units.’<sup>101</sup>

Methodological care in quantifying the ‘unquantifiable’<sup>102</sup> was not, however, practised by Martin van Creveld when in 1982 he compared the fighting capabilities of the American and German armies, arriving at the general judgement ‘that the average [German] soldier did not as a rule fight out of a belief in Nazi ideology—indeed the opposite may have been nearer the truth in many cases’.<sup>103</sup> Another, Israeli historian arrived, on the basis of three divisions of the first wave, at a different answer to Max Hastings’s question of why the German soldiers fought so well ‘in spite of their own demented Führer’;<sup>104</sup> Omer Bartov says in his dissertation that the language of commanders was, in the course of the war, getting in their commands ‘more and more National Socialist in terms and content, probably with the hope of providing their troops with that very belief in victory which the realities of the battlefield seemed to contradict’.<sup>105</sup>

Even though ‘final victory’ was no longer the issue in 1945, there were still fanatical commanders and NSFOs who were calling on their ‘National Socialist

<sup>99</sup> Address of 9 May 1945, repr. in Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, ii. 653.

<sup>100</sup> See the OSS report on ‘German military morale in the light of POW interrogations’, December 1943 to January 1944, NA RG 112, box 1304; Historical Study (B-338) by Günther Blumentritt, Allendorf 1947. I owe the former source to my friend Steve Welch, Melbourne.

<sup>101</sup> Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill*, 232 ff. See Ch. II of this section.

<sup>102</sup> Bartov, ‘Indoctrination and Motivation in the Wehrmacht’.

<sup>103</sup> Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 136.

<sup>104</sup> Hastings, *Overlord*, 319.

<sup>105</sup> Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, 171.

Party comrades' to respond to the 'bestialities of our accursed enemies' with deep-seated hatred and merciless vengeance, as well as with boundless love of the fatherland. 'The National Socialist ideology is the driving-force of our resistance, the inexhaustible source of our strength.'<sup>106</sup> The inner fabric of relations between Wehrmacht and National Socialism, between the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the people's army, was in fact a shifting pattern with many facets. As the Party and Wehrmacht succeeded in equating the core of National Socialist ideology with the much older military ideal of the soldier and his patriotic feelings for the fatherland, it is difficult for the historian to draw a line between pure ideology and normal motivation. What did it mean to a Wehrmacht soldier to be praised as 'the first socialist of the Reich', when 'true socialism' was equated with 'most rigorous fulfilment of one's duty'?<sup>107</sup>

The combination, skilfully assembled from 1933 onwards, of specifically National Socialist aims and supposed German interests is probably one of the reasons why soldiers after the war spoke of a 'split consciousness'. On the one hand, they argued, they had rejected National Socialism, while on the other they had seen it as their duty 'as a soldier to stand up for Germany'.<sup>108</sup> Because it was also a war for their homes and the fatherland, the Wehrmacht fought to the bitter end.

The total defeat and unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht meant too the end of the Nazi regime, but not the end of ideological warfare in Germany. As head of state, supreme commander of the Wehrmacht, and as a 'strong believer in the personal orientation and unity there was among the officers', and not just those of the navy, Grand Adm. Dönitz on 9 May 1945 said how the lost Second World War should be seen: 'We need not be ashamed. What the German Wehrmacht achieved in combat, and the German people in suffering, over these past six years is unique in history and in the world. It is unprecedented heroism. We soldiers stand here without a stain on our honour.'<sup>109</sup> This selective dealing with the past was continued by regional Wehrmacht commanders-in-chief in mid-May 1945, as they were issuing for themselves and their subordinates appropriate 'official' declarations to the effect that they had only been doing their duty and had known little or nothing of the hideous crimes of National Socialism.<sup>110</sup> Even in confidential talk among themselves, high-ranking officers insisted that in the war they had done nothing other than their duty. However, they also agreed that the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and in particular the improvement in the social status of the workers and in

<sup>106</sup> Appeal by II4. Jg.Div. NSFO, 26 Mar. 1945, BA-MA RH 26-114/36; see the 'Frontbekenntnis' (front-line avowal) of 4. Pz.Div. of February 1945, BA-MA RW 4/v. 357, and 'Information on ideological leadership' of military district VII, 15 Feb. 1945, BA-MA RH 53-7/v. 878.

<sup>107</sup> *Wofür kämpfen wir?*, 80-1.

<sup>108</sup> Schmidt, *Kindheit und Jugend unter Hitler*, 219.

<sup>109</sup> Dönitz's address to the officer corps of the Flensburg base, repr. in 1945: *Das Jahr der endgültigen Niederlage*.

<sup>110</sup> See Förster, 'Die Niederlage der Wehrmacht', 13-14.

their living standards, had been 'one of the greatest achievements of National Socialism'.<sup>111</sup>

Five years later, before a thorough discussion of 'The Wehrmacht and the Third Reich' had taken place, there were already thoughts in Germany about a military future. 'Naturally this involved a certain measure of deliberate consciousness-splitting, of on the one hand a wholesale rejection of Nuremberg, the Nuremberg trials, and the war crimes tribunals . . . while on the other using the acquittal of the "general staff and Wehrmacht high command" for rebuilding, and even boosting, self-assurance by means of the construct that Hitler and National Socialism alone were guilty',<sup>112</sup> that the Wehrmacht was without blame or blemish, and that the ideological war had been waged only by the SS and Gestapo.

Naturally enough, when in 1956 the new German conscript army was fitted into the democratic framework of the Federal Republic, a new start was deliberately made with what was termed inner leadership (*Innere Führung*). However, the first commandant of the school founded for this purpose in Koblenz still diagnosed in the Bundeswehr officer corps of 1956/7 'clear mistrust of our state and its institutions', and denigration of the education officers as 'democratic NSFOs'.<sup>113</sup> The *Historikerstreit*, the many controversial comments on the fiftieth anniversary of 8 May 1945, as well as the polemical arguments about the theses advanced by Daniel Goldhagen and the pictures in the first Wehrmacht exhibition at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, have shown, decades later, that neither the Germans nor the historians can get away from Hitler and the shared history of the Wehrmacht and the Third Reich by simply drawing a line under them.

<sup>111</sup> Eavesdrop transcript from the US 7th Army interrogation centre, 26 July 1945, NA RG 238, frames 1157–62. Those speaking were Field Marshal von Leeb, Gen. Guderian, and Gen. Geyr von Schweppenburg. A selection of British interrogation records was edited by Neitzel, *Deutsche Generale*.

<sup>112</sup> Meyer, 'Zur Situation der deutschen militärischen Führungsschicht', 620; on the 'ideological armament' of the Bundeswehr see Bauer and Grimm, *Das lautlose Gefecht*.

<sup>113</sup> See *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, i. 964.

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# B. The Social Profile of the German Army's Combat Units 1939-1945

CHRISTOPH RASS

## I. Principles and Prospects for Researching the Social Structures of Wehrmacht Units

THE personnel strengths of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS reached their peak around the turn of the year 1943/4. Since the beginning of the Second World War their numbers had, despite the already high losses of some 4.2 million men, more than doubled to 9.5 million. From then on there began an unstoppable process of disintegration that by the end of the war had whittled the German armed forces down to 7.5 million.<sup>1</sup> The casualty figures, which grew exponentially as the war went on, finally reached some 5.3 million members of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS dead or missing.<sup>2</sup> To this must be added several million wounded and disabled.<sup>3</sup> Making up for these losses, and boosting the strength of the armed forces, was achievable only by the cumulative mobilization of more than 18 million men for service with the army, Luftwaffe, Kriegsmarine, or Waffen-SS together with the paramilitary organizations.<sup>4</sup>

The immense extent of the German sphere of power that resulted from the conquests made in the first years of the war, plus the growing number of enemies combating German aggression, led to this vast expansion of the German war machine and culminated in an ever-greater overstretching of the armed forces; they strove, with rapidly shrinking resources, to extend the life of the Third Reich. Various attempts can be seen, at the planning level, to close this

<sup>1</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 830–2; Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer*, iii. 254; Madej, *Order of Battle*, i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 228–32.

<sup>3</sup> See Buchner, *Der Sanitätsdienst*, 86–7. The author works on the figure of 5.24m. wounded. This means, with an average of three woundings, a far higher number of events causing injury; on this see also Burkhart Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 143–51.

<sup>4</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 215.

unbridgeable gap between what was needed and what was actually possible, by moves to restructure the organization and make-up of military units. Improving efficiency in allocating personnel,<sup>5</sup> rigorously exploiting the labour potential of the occupied territories by means of forced labour and recruitment, tightening up the organizational structures, and making a partial improvement in the provision of matériel were meant to make an impossibility—‘final victory’ and with it the culmination of German crimes against humanity—still possible.<sup>6</sup>

These broad figures already make one thing clear: during the Second World War a dramatic social change took place within the German armed forces, one that meant that by the end of the war the army bore hardly any resemblance to the one that in September 1939 had attacked Europe in the name of Hitler and the Third Reich. Yet how the processes just succinctly outlined affected the social composition of the Wehrmacht units, their ability to function, and the reality of life for the soldiers serving over five and a half years of a total and criminal war, is something that still remains largely in the dark. In this context it is a matter most of all of looking at the personnel in the lower ranks of the military hierarchy, about whom there have so far been scarcely any empirically confirmed results with regard to the social structures within which the ordinary soldiers experienced the war.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless a contribution to bridging this gap can, both thematically and methodologically, draw on a series of research studies. Those carried out to quantify social groupings within the Third Reich began with research into the social composition of the National Socialist mass and elite organizations, in particular the NSDAP itself,<sup>8</sup> and quickly also took in parts of the SS and in particular the security apparatus.<sup>9</sup> From there it was but a short step to looking at the social profile of members of the Wehrmacht. Research has been focused most of all on the approaches taken by the ‘history of mentalities’<sup>10</sup> and on the developing of various models for explaining the actions and functions of Wehrmacht units and the soldiers in them, which were aimed not

<sup>5</sup> By personnel allocation is meant the distributing of the human resources available to the military system, implying that these resources are limited and their organization and deployment are dependent on certain factors.

<sup>6</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 884–90.

<sup>7</sup> The term ‘social structure’ here covers ‘effective connections in a multidimensional arrangement of a total society into different groups in accordance with major socially relevant features, and in the relatively permanent social relationships between the groups’, Geißler, *Die Sozialstruktur Deutschlands*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> See Reibel, *Fundament der Diktatur*; Falter and Kater, *Wähler und Mitglieder*; Kater, ‘Quantifizierung und NS-Geschichte’; id., *The Nazi Party*; Falter, ‘Wer wurde überhaupt Nationalsozialist’; Rothenberger, ‘NSDAP in der Pfalz’; Hänisch, ‘Die soziale Wählerbasis der NSDAP’; Schieder, ‘Die NSDAP vor 1933’; Childers, ‘National Socialism’; Childers and Chaplan, *The Nazi Voter*; Matzerath, ‘Oberbürgermeister im Dritten Reich’.

<sup>9</sup> See Ziegler, ‘Elite Recruitment’; Birn, *Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer*; Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*; Banach, *Heydrichs Elite*; Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*; Lasik, ‘Historical-Sociological Profile’.

<sup>10</sup> See Schröder, ‘Erfahrungen’, 309–25; also id., *Die gestohlenen Jahre*; id., *Kasernenzeit; Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum: Vernichtung; Stets zu erschießen sind Frauen*; Latzel, *Deutsche Soldaten*; Humburg, *Das Gesicht des Krieges*; Schröder, ‘Töten und Todesangst’.

least at gaining insight into the mental world of those who were taking part in war, war crimes, and genocide.<sup>11</sup> Alongside this there is a multiplicity of quantitative works on the officers of the Wehrmacht which, while on the one hand they mostly cover particular lines of enquiry, can on the other make a fundamental contribution to understanding the social change that took place in the Wehrmacht.<sup>12</sup> Despite frequent calls for something similar on the ranks of the NCOs and privates, a quantifying investigation of these segments of the Wehrmacht's personnel has so far made little progress; what there is therefore relates to case studies and has to be looked on as basic research.<sup>13</sup>

The following chapters look at the course, and the mechanisms, of social change within the units of the Wehrmacht and the social profile that resulted, taking as their example large infantry units.<sup>14</sup> This social-history analysis focuses particularly on the composition of the Wehrmacht personnel, collective biographies of the troops, and—as part of considering functional groupings in the social structure of a military organization—the study of primary groups<sup>15</sup> and their significance for group cohesion, that is to say the extent to which these 'stuck together', and the effectiveness and keenness of military units. Tackling the subject in this way means a twofold change of perspective. To start with, it calls for an approach that lies *between* the evaluating of the statistical material of the Wehrmacht itself and the acquiring of information from contemporary witnesses' own testimony that has long typified research. These two are now supplemented with the empirically based social-profile analysis that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods;<sup>16</sup> this analysis can yield a picture of the social profile of Wehrmacht units that instead of being static describes the dynamics of the social change. From this follows the second point, which is looking at *norms* as well as *extremes* as part of a long-term view.

<sup>11</sup> See Browning, *Ordinary Men*; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*; id., 'Von unten betrachtet'; id., 'German Soldiers'; critically on the subject Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 297–8, and Kühne, 'Der nationalsozialistische Vernichtungskrieg', 625–6; id., 'Zwischen Männerbund und Volksgemeinschaft'; id., 'Kameradschaft'; Bröckling, *Disziplin*; Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*; *Das andere Gesicht des Krieges*; 'Ich will raus aus diesem Wahnsinn'; Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen*; Kretschmer and Vogel, 'Feldpostbriefe im Zweiten Weltkrieg'; Latzel, 'Tourismus und Gewalt'; id., 'Vom Kriegserlebnis zur Kriegserfahrung'; Schröder, 'Vergegenwärtigung des Zweiten Weltkrieges'; Schüddekopf, *Krieg*; Ulrich, 'Militärsgeschichte von unten'; *Krieg des kleinen Mannes*. See also both Kilian and Zargovec in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II (still to be published).

<sup>12</sup> See Förster, 'Vom Führerheer der Republik', 317; Kroener, 'Strukturelle Veränderungen'; id., 'Auf dem Weg'; *Germany and the Second World War*, vi/II, 918–42; Preradovich, *Die militärische und soziale Herkunft*; Bald, *Der deutsche Offizier*; Bartov, *The Eastern Front*.

<sup>13</sup> See Bessel, 'Living with the Nazis', 213; Kohl, 'Ich wundere mich', 301; Deist, 'Der deutsche Angriff', 370; Wette, 'Es roch nach Ungeheuerlichem', 63; Bartov, 'German Soldiers', 168–9; Ziemann, 'Fluchten', 601.

<sup>14</sup> The social profile of a group is a description of it on the basis of certain social features such as the age structure, the length of membership of the groups, or the geographical or social origins of the members of the groups.

<sup>15</sup> The term 'primary groups' was coined in 1909 by the American sociologist Charles H. Cooley, see Cooley, *Social Organization*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Social-profile analysis, in its social-structure methods, looks at the biographies of the members of a group from the viewpoint of the social characteristics mentioned earlier, such as origins, education, career pattern, age structure, and so on.

Whereas both the accounts in the documents of the Wehrmacht command and the reports from contemporary witnesses have largely placed emphasis on dramatic out-of-the-ordinary events—military crisis, the battle for individual survival, the annihilation of small units right up to that of whole armies, the experience of quite individual powerlessness amidst the maelstrom of war—it is now a matter of looking at medium- and long-term developments as well. So the horizons for reconstructing social processes become the whole period over which a Wehrmacht unit existed just as much as the overall biography of an individual belonging to the Wehrmacht. To serve as source material there are various collections of personal documents that provide objective (within limits) information on the biographies of Wehrmacht members.

Of special importance in the Federal Archive's *Deutsche Dienststelle* (an office set up to collate and make available information on Wehrmacht casualties) are the list of awards of the Iron Cross and War Service Cross to members of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, the personal papers of other ranks, non-commissioned officers, and officers in the army and Luftwaffe, and the papers of Wehrmacht courts martial.<sup>17</sup> These documents were initially collected in the Bundesarchiv Zentraldienststelle; in December 2005 this branch of the Federal Archives was closed, and its holdings moved partly to the Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) in Berlin and partly to the Federal Archives Military Archive (BA-MA) at Freiburg. As a consequence the personnel records of rank-and-file soldiers, as well as those of NCOs, can now be found at the Deutsche Dienststelle. While the awards lists are important mostly as a starting point for tracking down documents relating to individuals,<sup>18</sup> detailed information about the Wehrmacht personnel themselves is to be found in their *Wehrstammbuch* (the office-held version of the service record book).<sup>19</sup> This, together with the *Wehrpaß* (its personally-held counterpart) and *Soldbuch* (pay record book), forms the most comprehensive source of information about other ranks and NCOs. Issued by the recruiting and induction centres, the *Wehrstammbuch* brings together all information about a soldier. It covers his whole life, including a wide range of personal data

<sup>17</sup> On this see Dillgard, 'Die Zentralsachverhaltstelle des Bundesarchivs'; Keilig, *Wenn Beweis-papiere fehlen*; Absolon, *Wehrgesetz und Wehrdienst*, 400–1. In what follows the papers of courts martial will not be considered in detail, see Wüllner, *Die NS-Militärjustiz*, 129–30.

<sup>18</sup> See Absolon, *Wehrgesetz und Wehrdienst*, 405. The awards lists catalogue, at division level and continuously, all troops awarded the decorations in question, and together with the German administration centre registers of identity tags constitute the only comprehensive lists of names of the members of individual military formations. Since the research for this article was carried out, the original personnel lists of the Wehrmacht have been made available to researchers. A research project carried out by the author will in 2007 provide approx. 20,000 personal files in fully digitized form, as well as other material relevant to reconstructing the process of social change within German military units.

<sup>19</sup> See Dillgard, *Die Zentralsachverhaltstelle des Bundesarchivs*, 260–1. The collections contain between three and four million of these documents, and represent a remaining 20 per cent or so of the personnel documents issued by the end of the war. The corresponding documents of members of the Kriegsmarine were with only a few exceptions handed over to the Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) in Berlin.

and main life events from birth to enlistment and—depending on the completeness of the documents—his military career in the Wehrmacht.<sup>20</sup> The *Wehrpaß*, on the other hand, accompanied the soldier throughout his journey through the military organization and was maintained by his current duty station; it formed an almost identical copy of the *Wehrstammbuch*. The *Soldbuch*, however, was kept by the soldier himself; it was similar to an identity document, and contained partly differing information.<sup>21</sup>

In practice, the flow of information between the troops' units and the recruiting centres could very soon take place in widely differing ways, so that already for the early years of the war one finds service record books of widely varying degrees of completeness. This was dictated mostly by the specific situation in which a front-line troop unit found itself, and the actual paths of communication that resulted. Both could mean that reporting channels were not maintained, and the required information could not be transmitted. It can also be seen that the Wehrmacht's personnel administration was not prepared for the expansion into an army of millions, such that as the war went on the vast number of amendments needing to be made to documents overloaded the system. In August 1944 the OKW finally dealt with the situation by ordering that the *Wehrstammbuch* should thenceforth be maintained only up to the completion of basic training and then remain with the recruiting centre (*Wehrmeldeamt*) where it would no longer be updated. Reports coming in would simply be collected and kept with a view to completing the documents at a later date.<sup>22</sup>

The archives of the tracing service of the German Red Cross contain, together with the list of the missing and a card index of returnees, collections of sources relating to individual persons.<sup>23</sup> Both the MIA list and the index were used after the Second World War as an aid to discovering the fate of troops who were missing, and include at company level on the one hand military personnel who were still in the 1950s regarded as missing, and on the other the results of the questioning of members of the Wehrmacht returning from Allied POW camps.<sup>24</sup>

The Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) in Berlin<sup>25</sup> holds two further sources of importance for the social history of the Wehrmacht.<sup>26</sup> The identification tag indexes recorded every change in the personnel strength of a unit at the

<sup>20</sup> A full description of the setting-up of service record books and guidelines on maintaining them can be found in Filges, *Leifaden*, pt. XI, *Wehrstammbuch*; *ibid.*, pt. V, *Wehrpaß*; *ibid.*, pt. VIII, *Soldbuch*.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*, pt. I, *Gesamtübersicht*, and pt. VIII, *Soldbuch*; Absolon, *Wehrgesetz und Wehrdienst*, 144–5, 365; Filges, *Leifaden*, pt. XII, *Kriegsstammbuch*.

<sup>22</sup> AHM 1944, No. 476, 264; see Absolon, *Wehrgesetz und Wehrdienst*, 366.

<sup>23</sup> See Böhme, *Gesucht wird*, 87; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 72–3; Remmers, *Deutsche Dienststelle*, 49–58.

<sup>24</sup> See Böhme, *Gesucht wird*, 216 ff.; Ampferl, 'Verschollen im Zweiten Weltkrieg', 534–5; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 87–8, 91–2.

<sup>25</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated as DDSt.

<sup>26</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 13–14, 104–37; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, xv, No. 5, 42–3; Remmers, *Deutsche Dienststelle*, 15–16.

level of a company or comparable units.<sup>27</sup> The Wehrmacht casualty reports that have been preserved contain information on personnel departures from Wehrmacht units as a result of death, wounding, being posted missing, or illness.<sup>28</sup> Although this cannot be taken to mean that the statistical material this yields is absolutely precise, it still offers the best possible, and so far most accurate, overview of dead, wounded, and missing troops at unit level.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of the 253rd Infantry Division from Rhineland-Westphalia ('253rd ID') selected as the representative subject for this study, the names of 16,020 other ranks and NCOs and 702 officers of the division's personnel were obtained from the war-decorations records, and entered on computer. Checks on a random selection of 12,800 names in the collections of the Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle yielded a sample of 2,291 *Wehrstammbücher* of other ranks and NCOs together with sixty-five personnel records of officers of the line, which form the empirical core of the social analysis and have been complemented with extracts from the other sources mentioned above. The German Red Cross list of troops posted missing has 2,187 entries relating to the 253rd ID, while its index of returnees has details of 3,492 soldiers. To provide an example in even greater detail, original complement lists and change reports of the 453rd Infantry/Grenadier Regiment between November 1939 and January 1945 were processed and collated to give a quantitative survey of the structure of monthly arrivals and departures for each company in the regiment. To complement this, a full survey of the indexes of identity tags and change reports of a company of the 464th Infantry Regiment from 1939 to 1945 made it possible to build a detailed model of the social change in small groups, based on the data for 1,545 soldiers in this unit, and thus a much improved foundation for researching primary groups. Where individual-related data are concerned, the entries in the various data banks were brought together by record linkage.<sup>30</sup>

The social-profile analysis shown here combines the structured study of Wehrmacht infantry divisions and their replacement units with a specific study of the 253rd ID mentioned above. Taking it as an example, an attempt has been made, *pars pro toto*, to reconstruct the social composition of the lower ranks and the social change taking place in this segment of the Wehrmacht personnel. In doing so, basic parameters of personnel allocation are

<sup>27</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 162; Filges, *Leitfaden*, pt. XIII, Erkennungsmarken.

<sup>28</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 14–16; Remmers, *Deutsche Dienststelle*, 23–4.

<sup>29</sup> Available in principle besides these there are the sick report books kept by the Wehrmacht's medical services, which are today (when they have been preserved) housed in the *Krankenbuch-lager* in Berlin. In making use of these there are a number of points to bear in mind: these books do not provide information in the way needed at unit level, but record all treatments given by a particular military medical centre. The data thus recorded were besides also passed on to the Wehrmacht information office, and thus incorporated in the documents on casualties. Furthermore the collections are extremely patchy. In the case of the 253rd Infantry Division only a few sick report books have been discovered, which for the most part match the casualty reports in the Wehrmacht information office (now the Deutsche Dienststelle).

<sup>30</sup> For a fuller description see Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 23, 40–1.

also discussed<sup>31</sup> as well as the resulting social-demographic processes and the social profile of various arms of the services. This allows insights into the collective biography of German soldiers in the Second World War and in social groupings and functional branches of the Wehrmacht personnel. Finally, the phenomenon of primary group formation is observed, at the level of the regiment and battalion and right down to the lowest ascertainable stage of social relationships, the company. The result is a picture that can provide a first guide towards understanding the social processes that occurred within the Wehrmacht during the Second World War.

<sup>31</sup> On this see n. 5 above.



## II. Changes in the Organizational Structure of the Army

IN order to record the social change in the Wehrmacht between 1939 and 1945 it was necessary first to work out the socio-historical key points of change and classifications by means of which the basic parameters of such a vast and complex institution become manageable. This included as well dividing up this highly dynamic social system into various organizational segments within which specific factors shaped the change in the social profile, like a basic periodizing of its structural development.

Although in a modern army there is a predominant number of soldiers who at any given moment are *not* directly involved in combat activities—because they are among the supporting forces outside the battle zone, or are combat troops who are recovering from injury or illness, or are still undergoing training—social change in a military organization is determined by changes within its fighting units.<sup>1</sup> The forces of war act directly upon it in all its facets, while the fighting formations for their part, through what they do and the way they do it, put their stamp to a high degree on the character and complexion of the war.<sup>2</sup> In the Wehrmacht the fighting units, in the middle of the war, made up about half of the army in the field, and within this again the infantry divisions formed the most important type of unit.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the war infantry divisions contained, from the organizational viewpoint, the largest part of the Wehrmacht's troops, and thus offer a suitable point of reference for investigating the change in the army's social structure.

Looking at military casualties and change in organizational structure, the development of the Wehrmacht as a social system can be divided into three phases. In the first phase—from the start of the war to the attack on the Soviet Union—there were 130,000 or so dead and missing, only around 2.5 per cent of all German losses, while in quantitative and organizational terms the fighting forces underwent a great expansion. Over this period the social structures of the Wehrmacht formations remained largely undisturbed. Changes resulted mostly from the raising of new units, for which as a rule some of their troops were drawn from already existing units. The shortfalls that this caused could

<sup>1</sup> See Stouffer, *The American Soldier* (1949), 61–2. 'Combat units' is taken to mean primarily large formations whose main task lay in the fighting of battles. This level was initially taken to also include supporting forces within the divisional framework, while later on during analysis of the individual examples a further differentiation was made; see also Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1041.

<sup>3</sup> See Madej, *Order of Battle*, i. 74–5.

in most instances be made good as part of the topping-up from the relevant replacement training units.<sup>4</sup>

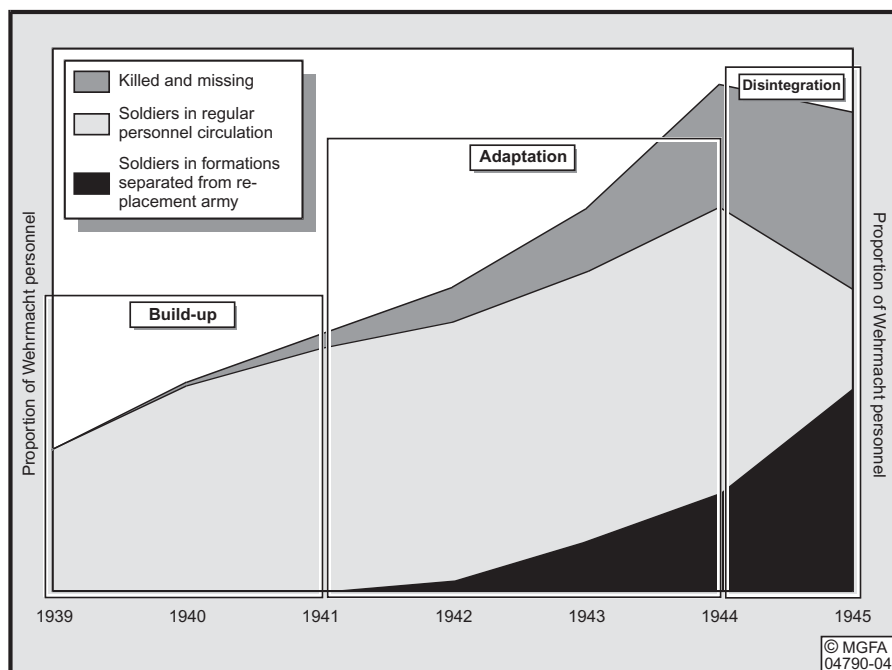
The second phase—ushered in by the collapse of Operation BARBAROSSA in the winter of 1941/2—was marked initially by the first massive losses and the end of the blitzkrieg phase, and then by the costly offensive operations in 1942 and 1943 and the defeats and retreats that ensued. This phase brought the casualty figures up, between June 1941 and June 1944, to close on half the Wehrmacht's total losses during the war. The Third Reich reacted to this change in circumstances with a succession of drastic trawls of available manpower resources, with organizational changes to boost the efficiency of the personnel allocation, and with adapting its military structures (for instance by introducing specialization to the large formations).<sup>5</sup> Yet still the number of vacancies in the army's units constantly rose, as did the number of units whose combat capacity could not be maintained or restored.<sup>6</sup> Developments like this led to complex social changes in the units concerned, which had an effect not least on the Wehrmacht troops' combat ability and social behaviour. Yet—if only for an already shrinking proportion of the Wehrmacht's units—the mechanisms that would ensure a certain quantitative and also social continuity within the Wehrmacht structures still functioned. At the heart of these was the military personnel allocation system, which was founded on three bases. First, maintaining a relatively high level of training of new recruits, even in the second phase of the war. Secondly, the close link between a unit and a recruiting catchment area from which the overwhelming majority of its replacement personnel were to come, thus encouraging a high degree of social homogeneity within the units and with it strong bonds of comradeship between the soldiers through their local ties. The third basis is seen in the return of the wounded, after recovery, to their old field units, which would slow down the rate of social change and ensure that units had a nucleus of battle-seasoned men.<sup>7</sup> At this stage a drop in the available replacements is not yet synonymous with a breakdown in the replacement system. Rather, the Wehrmacht seems in many of the major formations to have managed to maintain for the most part a satisfactory ratio between the numbers of fresh personnel brought in from the core recruitment area or from a given unit's replacement unit,

<sup>4</sup> See DDSt, Erkennungsmarkenverzeichnisse IR453 (identification tag indexes for 453rd Infantry Regiment); NARA, T-315, Film 1755, Frame 408; Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, viii. 226; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 966–86.

<sup>5</sup> See Nafzinger, *The German Order of Battle*, 1–2. The structuring of infantry divisions at the start of the Second World War differs only slightly from that during the First. It is interesting that during the First World War as well there was a reduction in the nominal strength of infantry divisions from around 17,500 to 12,500, see *Histories of 251 Divisions*, IV.

<sup>6</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 879–9, 1018–19.

<sup>7</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 20–5.



Sources: Madej, *German Army Order of Battle*, i; Overmans, *Deutsche Militärische Verluste*.

DIAGRAM II.B.II.I. Social change in the field army

and those drawn from elsewhere; such a ratio was necessary if effective social groups were to result.<sup>8</sup>

The Allied landing in Normandy, Operation OVERLORD, and the unleashing of the Soviet summer offensive, Operation BAGRATION, in mid-1944 saw the start of the third and final phase which lasted through to the end of the war; it was linked with the final military death throes of the Third Reich, and ended with massive losses of life and final battles. More than 50 per cent of the Wehrmacht's total losses occurred within a mere ten months. Under these conditions, basic functions of personnel allocation began to break down, at an increasing pace and in ever larger parts of the armed forces. Units broke adrift from their replacement units, which were themselves mobilized to join in the fighting, and haemorrhaged personnel; weakened divisions were decoupled from the replacement training army and continued to operate as *Volksgründler* divisions; other units were entirely wiped out, destroyed, or disbanded. One after another, the mechanisms that up to then had moulded the social profile of the Wehrmacht lost their effect.

Among the soldiers it is possible against this background to identify three groups, illustrated in Diagram II.B.II.I. First, there were the permanent

<sup>8</sup> See Hedler, *Aufbau des Ersatzwesens*, 131-8; Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 26, 64-5; cf. Chapter III.6(c) in this section.

military losses in those killed and missing. In respect of the social composition of a unit these were, together with the social profile of the new replacement troops, the second important factor in the speed and nature of the social change. Second, there were those soldiers who, as either wounded or fit-for-action members of a unit, remained within the Wehrmacht's normal planned channels of movement between the field army and replacement army or in various units of these two parts of the Wehrmacht. They belonged to units whose social profile was determined by the regular mechanism of personnel allocation. And third, there were all those soldiers who, by reason of their individual fate or that of their units, were divorced from these structures and consequently belonged to kinds of unit where the social composition no longer followed rules of any kind.

Using this phase model to draw general conclusions is possible only to a certain extent, and has to make allowance for the varying circumstances in the other theatres of operations. The eastern front, where not only the great bulk of the Wehrmacht forces were tied up, but where—even without taking account of the endgame battles raging there since the latter half of 1944—some 52 per cent of the casualties occurred, stands out above all the others.<sup>9</sup> The processes taking place there dominated the change in the Wehrmacht's social structure from 1941 to 1945. While the northern, southern, and south-eastern theatres all ranked lower in terms of numbers, the war in the west did not, in the connection being discussed here, take on any real importance until the Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944.<sup>10</sup> The development could therefore move almost seamlessly from the first phase with no dramatic losses and only slow social change to the third, one marked by structural disintegration and hard to encompass.

This division into three periods can, by analysing the infantry and its related segment of the replacement training army, be traced at the structural level as well.<sup>11</sup> There were some 290 infantry division units in the field army during the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> Between 1939 and 1941 the number of infantry divisions in being at the same time grew from 90 at the start of the war to 159 in June 1940 and around 175 by June 1941.<sup>13</sup> Up to the middle of 1944 the number of major units varied, as a result of total casualties, disbandments, and raising of new units, between 175 and 200, and dropped sharply

<sup>9</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 276–7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 265.

<sup>11</sup> This analysis shows the infantry and reserve divisions in being at the end of each quarter-year. The data were taken from Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, pp. i–xiv. Diagram II.B.ii.2 is based on the times of their raising and disbanding shown there, and consequently does not always match the data compiled by the Wehrmacht during the war.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. i–xiv; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 986–1009, 1019–21; Nafzinger, *The German Order of Battle*, 28–30. Rush, 'A Different Perspective', 495, quoted 283 infantry divisions. The figure used here includes 22 re-raising of divisions as regular units under the same division number; such units are consequently counted twice, although they existed under the same division designation. To indicate this and make the necessary distinction clear, the term 'division units' has been adopted. 'Unit' is thus here not a military but an analytical expression.

<sup>13</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 811, 964, 979. The last figure is taken from Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, pp. i–xiv.



from the middle of that year to the end of the war.<sup>14</sup> At the turn of the year 1944/5 there were—irrespective of their personnel numbers—still around 100 large infantry formations akin to a division.<sup>15</sup> On average, there were 169 large infantry units in existence at the same time, with an average length of life of about 39 months. In the field army 23.4 per cent of them lasted for under 15 months, 18.2 per cent for between 15 and 40 months, and 58.4 per cent for more than 40 months. Despite wide fluctuations, therefore, the large infantry units were long-lived rather than being marked by a rapid alternation of creation and break-up. The periods of existence of Wehrmacht infantry divisions are charted serially in Diagram II.B.II.3.<sup>16</sup> This shows on the horizontal axis, as a timescale, the initial raising and re-forming of Wehrmacht infantry divisions between 1939 and 1945, and their disbandment or destruction. A cross-section shows the composition of the infantry at a given time in respect of the creation and disbandment dates and length of life of its large units.<sup>17</sup> On the vertical axis the lower end of each period of existence shows when the unit was formed, while the upper end gives the date on which a unit was disbanded or destroyed or converted into a different type of unit such as a *Volksgrenadier* division.<sup>18</sup> Between September 1939 and the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 the army underwent a great expansion in both its personnel strength and its organizational structure. This took place, against the background of only a small number of military casualties, very largely through the mobilization of existing reserves of manpower. Sixty-nine per cent of the division units were raised before the turn of the year 1941/2; of these 200 units, however, only around 175 were still in being by the end of 1941. The remaining division units had, as a result of organizational measures, already been disbanded in 1940 and 1941 or converted into other kinds of unit such as panzer divisions. Later on the cuts in the number of divisions brought about by the military events in 1941 and 1942, such as the battle for Stalingrad, become apparent. Also evident is their comparatively low strengths as a result of the casualty figures suffered from mid-1944, the dramatic course of which can clearly be seen.

The units being lost had been raised at different times and had consequently existed for different periods, so this in combination with the raising of new units—a trend that grew markedly as the war progressed—led to a mix of relatively young and relatively old units. But even among the large infantry units that were still capable of action when the war ended the majority belonged to the *old* infantry divisions that had already been raised before 1942. So at any

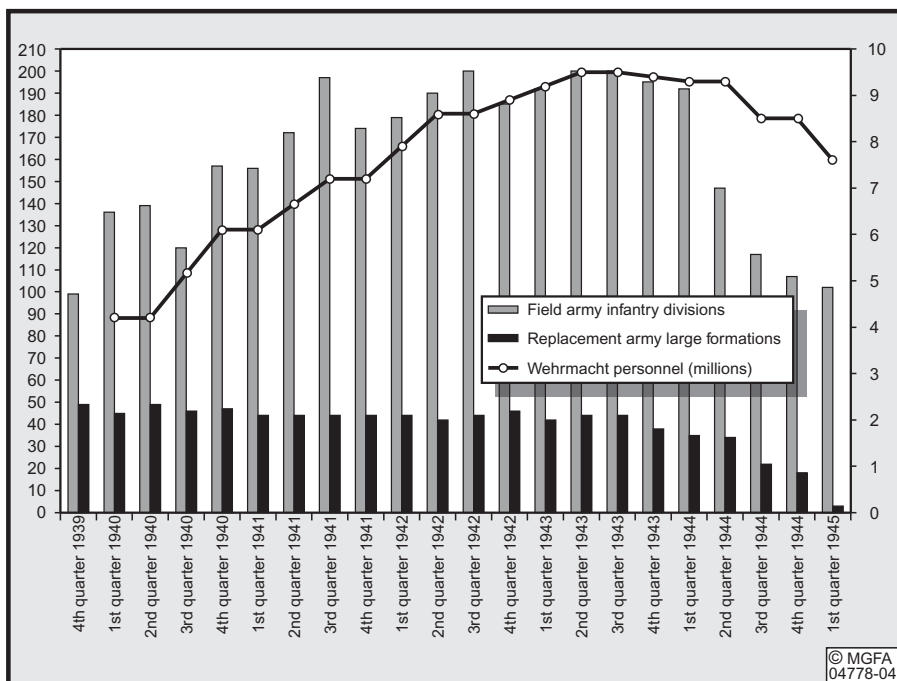
<sup>14</sup> The highest number of major units in the army was reached in the First World War at the end of 1917 at 240, including 139 infantry, 55 reserve, and 34 territorial reserve divisions. At that time the field army had a strength of around 5.25m. men, see Busche, *Formationsgeschichte*, Ann., 2, and *Formationsgeschichte*, 314–15.

<sup>15</sup> These are 'division units'. Divisions may thus sometimes, by reason of being re-formed, appear more than once. No account is taken of *Volksgrenadier* divisions.

<sup>16</sup> Here again as division units.

<sup>17</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, pp. i–xiv.

<sup>18</sup> See Nafzinger, *The German Order of Battle*, 33. Since it has to be assumed that with the conversion to a *Volksgrenadier* division the development of the social profile no longer matched the original mechanisms, these forms of organization are excluded.



Sources: Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, i–xiv; Madej, *German Army Order of Battle*, I; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*.

DIAGRAM II.B.II.3. Infantry and reserve divisions, 1939–1945

given time, infantry divisions that had been in existence longer determined the character of the infantry despite the many units that had been either disbanded or wiped out. The gap that opened up in mid-1944 between the number of large units and the personnel strength of the Wehrmacht can in part be ascribed to the increasing number of troops absorbed into new kinds of unit.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, one can examine the length of life of divisions of the replacement army, which mobilized, trained, and took charge of the replacement troops for the infantry divisions.<sup>20</sup> Both similar and differing structural features can thus be seen. There is evidence of some 98 units akin to a division having been in existence in this part of the Wehrmacht in the course of the war. As in the field army, most of the replacement army's large units came into being before the attack on the Soviet Union. Through the creation and reorganization of the reserve structures, and the disbanding and reorganizing of units that this entailed, there was less structural integrity at unit level in the replacement

<sup>19</sup> See Diagram II.B.II.4.

<sup>20</sup> While the replacement army was in fact not organized entirely in divisions, its divisions were not as rigidly structured as the field divisions and frequently included the replacement units for several divisions of the field army; studying the reserve divisions therefore gives a good impression of the history of the structure of the replacement army; see also Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, pp. i–xiv.



army than in the field army.<sup>21</sup> While in the middle of 1944 there were between 40 and 49 large units in being in the replacement army at the same time, they remained so for an average of around 29 months. The length of life of a replacement army unit became more and more clearly either relatively short or relatively long. Forty-two per cent of formations lasted for less than 15 months, 17.4 per cent for between 15 and 40 months, and 41 per cent for more than 40 months. Just as in the field army, the second half of 1944 saw the beginning of a collapse of stable command and social structures; this—to make a further comparison—was even more marked in the replacement than in the field army, as the majority of the replacement army's replacement and training units were successively either transferred to combat units or disbanded.<sup>22</sup> By early 1945 only three reserve divisions are identifiable as such. Although the fluctuation in the replacement army, in terms of its divisions, was thus greater than in the field army, the impression is here again confirmed—taking as yardstick the number of large units in being at any given time—of a relatively stable development up to the middle of 1944. Two further aspects are important in assessing this: first, organizational changes in the replacement army were as a rule not—as they were in the field army—due to direct military casualties, but rather a matter of planned reorganizations. And secondly, recruits and convalescent troops spent a relatively brief time with the replacement units. Stability in these periods was already a guarantee of a stable milieu for recruits or convalescents.

These findings argue against the idea that the Wehrmacht's high casualty figures and organizational adaptation of its units to these should be equated at once with a disintegration of functional structures. In particular, the rising overall strength of the Wehrmacht when there was a virtually constant number of large formations poses the question of which areas of the Wehrmacht the growing manpower resources were being used in. Military setbacks could be due less to a failure of the Wehrmacht's internal structures than to the military superiority of the Allies, and especially the Soviet Union, in the final phase of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Given the wide range of differing fates suffered by units, generalizations about the intensity with which large infantry formations were in action on the eastern front can, for any longish period, be made only with a great deal of caution. One ground on which the variation in intensity of action can be gauged is however offered by the system of 'action points'.

From the start of the war against the Soviet Union these points were awarded daily for each large Wehrmacht formation on the eastern front, in order to provide a yardstick for allocating the quotas of decorations. For a full day resting a division was given 0 points, and for a day during which parts of the formation were in action 1 point. If the whole division was engaged in combat, 2 points were scored, 5 points for hard-fought combat, and for the

<sup>21</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 1023–4.

<sup>22</sup> Based on the periods of existence of 98 large units of the replacement army. The main data are taken from Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, pp. i–xiv.

<sup>23</sup> See Weinberg, 'German Plans for Victory', 227.

TABLE II.B.II.I. *Days in action and action points gained*

Category	December 1943	June 1944
Action days (AD)	900	1,072
Action points (AP)	1,060	1,303
Action quotient (AQ = AD/AP)	0.92	0.87
<i>n</i> (Infantry divisions)	89	101

heaviest fighting with high casualties 10 points a day. Summary lists survive from December 1943 and June 1944.<sup>24</sup>

The disposition survey of 30 June 1944 contains information on a total of 203 infantry and panzer divisions, together with other units, belonging to Army Groups North, Centre, South, and North Ukraine; for 161 of these their action points scores for June 1944 are listed. Analysis of a selection of 101 infantry divisions yielded an average figure of 1,303 action points for the period 21 June 1941 to 30 June 1944. As might be expected, these infantry divisions, forming the bulk of the troops, achieved very much higher scores than the security divisions guarding rear areas. For a sample of nine security divisions, the average number of action points was 621. On the other hand, as is obvious from a comparison with Table II.B.II.I, 'Days in action and action points gained', panzer divisions with an average of 1,564 points had to cope with clearly more intense fighting.

These figures can be supplemented with the average number of days in action of infantry units on the eastern front.<sup>25</sup> The action quotient (AQ) calculated from this shows how many days an infantry division needed to score one action point. A lower action quotient thus indicates a harsher level of action than a higher one. The frequency distribution over a range of 0.7 to 1.9 shows a clear clustering at the lower end of the scale; 68 of the units studied had a quotient of less than unity, 20 of them between 0.7 and 0.8, and a further 22 between 0.8 and 0.9. With only 33 divisions was the action quotient higher than 1, and they included only 17 units with an AQ between 1 and 1.1. The 253rd ID, with an AQ of 0.78, lay slightly below the mean; the division thus experienced harder-than-average combat.

Compared with the action-points statistics from 31 December 1943, which are also available, the average value for action quotients fell from 0.92 to 0.87.

<sup>24</sup> BA-ZNS, Ordensabteilung P5 (10), OKH PA/P5 (b) 1. Staffel, Az., 29a12 - 732/44 G.Kos; BA-ZNS, Ordensabteilung P5 (10), award status at 31 Dec. 1943; BA-ZNS, Ordensabteilung P5 (10), award status at 30 June 1944.

<sup>25</sup> This means not the number of days of a unit's existence from formation to disbandment, destruction, the end of the war, or a set date, but the time span over which action points are awarded. For divisions already in being before the attack on the Soviet Union the count starts from 21 June 1941; for divisions raised later at the beginning of the month in which they were formed.

The average action-points value had still been 1,060 on 31 December 1943, and rose by 243 points within only six months; action intensity had thus, compared with the period from June 1941 to December 1943, increased by more than the average in the first half of 1944. Comparative measurements are possible with 89 formations: with 60 of these the action quotient fell, meaning that action was fiercer, with 29 the situation improved, such that the deteriorations (with AQ values rising by up to 30 per cent) were far more drastic than the improvements. All taken together, the figures are evidence of the worsening situation on the eastern front during the early months of 1944. The 253rd ID, with its AQ rising by 5.86 per cent, shows the greatest easing of the situation among all the infantry divisions examined. This development matches the history of the division over the period in question, during which the 253rd ID, by being transferred out of Army Group Centre to Army Group North Ukraine, escaped the fierce combat action that began there in the spring—a finding that vouches for the reliability of the indicator.

A comparison of the four main army groups in the eastern theatre in the summer of 1944, taking in 95 of the 101 units referred to above, yields figures that differ only slight from one another. This is shown clearly in Table II.B.II.2: the length of existence and intensity of action of the large infantry formations on the eastern front vary only little on average between June 1941 and June 1943. Against this background, one can assume up to mid-1944 a personnel allocation that while structurally working according to plan was still unsatisfactory in terms of numbers; in individual cases this was of course dependent on factors such as the date of the unit's formation and where the action took place.

In the final phase of the war the processes of disintegration in the field army and replacement army had an accelerating effect on each other. Units of the replacement army were mobilized to go into action at a time when there was still scarcely any capacity for transporting replacement troops in the operational areas of the field army. At the same time this meant that for the troops in the field it was not only the return of their wounded after convalescence that was lost, but also the previously continuous supply of fresh, trained recruits. Nonetheless the available reports of the army's personnel strength from the start of

TABLE II.B.II.2. *Average intensity of action in various army groups*

Army group	Action points	Days in action	Action quotient	<i>n</i> (infantry divisions)
North	1,321	1,083	0.84	25
Centre	1,344	1,090	0.87	30
North Ukraine	1,409	1,081	0.80	15
South Ukraine	1,176	1,036	0.93	25
Other	1,286	1,076	0.87	6

1945, assuming 1.4 million soldiers in the replacement army and 3.7 million in the field army,<sup>26</sup> suggest that despite mutual dependence a distinction has to be made analytically between the breakdown of microstructures at unit level and the collapse of the macrostructures of the field and replacement armies.

It is possible, from these general observations, to arrive at a few starting points for making a social-profile analysis of Wehrmacht units:

1. The first phase of the war was marked by an expansion of the Wehrmacht's personnel numbers and organization. One feature of this process was social changes brought about by the way the formation was raised. While the social change made no deep inroads into the social profile, it did form part of the soldiers' experience even before the massive losses on the eastern front.
2. Between mid-1941 and 1944, social change in the Wehrmacht was indeed more dramatic than during the first two years of the war, but at the same time its structures were still able to adapt to the new circumstances and maintain a certain level of continuity in the personnel.
3. In the third phase from mid-1944 there began to be processes of disintegration that make generalizations about the development of the social composition of Wehrmacht formations, and its consequences, more and more difficult—if not indeed impossible—to make.
4. The chronology of the phase model arrived at for the eastern theatre of operations differs not only with the theatre but also depends on the individual situation of each unit, which was affected by what happened to both the field-troops and replacement-troops components.
5. The central concern remains an investigation of the Wehrmacht's social subsystems *not* from the viewpoint of their destruction or disintegration (for that relates only to the last and in the main shortest phase of their history), but by looking at the period over which they existed. Taking this perspective makes it clear that changing but fully functioning social structures were more typical of the majority of large formations than the dramatic moments of their collapse—even though these occupy a dominant place in the memory of the survivors and in military historians' research.
6. Framework dates, which are available for the great majority of the infantry divisions raised during the Second World War, reveal a series of similar features. Reduced to formation, period in being, and intensity of action, and correlated with a schematically simplified model of the army's social and structural development, social development within Wehrmacht units is geared to a set of internal and external factors that make it possible, abstracting from the individual case, to deduce general structures.

<sup>26</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer*, iii. 254; Madej, *Order of Battle*, i. 4.

### III. Analysis of a Specimen Infantry Division

#### I. OPERATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL HISTORY

THE history of the 253rd Infantry Division began when it was formed on 26 August 1939. Only seven days later, on 2 September, when the bulk of its troops had arrived, the unit reported itself 'ready to march'.<sup>1</sup> The 253rd ID was spread over a series of Wehrmacht sites in the west of military district VI, including Düsseldorf, Hagen, Cologne, Wesel, Münster, Düren, Eschweiler, and Aachen, and as a 4th-wave division<sup>2</sup> was mobilized during the first months of the Second World War. At this time the 253rd ID was not yet ready to go into action, but busy with the training and equipping of its units. Its first engagement came with the Wehrmacht's invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940, when on the left wing of Army Group B it was allotted the task of attacking the north-west part of the defences of Liège. From there the division advanced via Namur and Charleroi to Lille, and then swung south to take part in the Wehrmacht's blitzkrieg operations in France. Between June 1940 and the spring of 1941 its units were stationed in the département of Haute-Marne as occupation troops. It was then moved to the build-up area for the attack on the Soviet Union, which the division began on 21 June 1941 as a southern-wing division of Army Group North. Very soon after that, however, it joined the left wing of Army Group Centre, to which it belonged up to the middle of 1944 and again from February to May 1945. The division spent the winter of 1941/2 near the town of Rzhev north-west of Moscow. It remained there until the Wehrmacht retreated from the Rzhev salient in February 1943, was moved in June that year to the area north of Orel', and then took part in the Wehrmacht's doomed 1943 summer offensive. This defeat began a series of withdrawals at intervals, via Bryansk and Gomel' to Bobruysk. Early in 1944 the 253rd ID drew back across the Berezina in the area south of Kowel, and then took part in the renewed attempt by Army Group Centre to stabilize its front. In March 1944, under the Ninth Army, the division played a part in the mass deportations of civilians at Ozariči,<sup>3</sup> in the course of which the Wehrmacht drove some 50,000 Soviet nationals who had been assessed as unfit for work into no man's land between the German and Soviet battle lines, regardless

<sup>1</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1754, Frame 134-5; activity report No. 1 of Dept. IVa for 26 Aug. 1939 to 12 Apr. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 51. See on the mobilization of large formation in 'waves', *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 810-11.

<sup>2</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, i. 40. The term 'wave' means military formations raised at the same time, with the same structure and same equipment.

<sup>3</sup> A settlement at 52°28 N, 29°15 E, in Belarus.

of the thousands of deaths this would cause.<sup>4</sup> Shortly before the collapse of Army Group Centre in the summer of 1944 the division was switched to Army Group North Ukraine, thus probably escaping annihilation. In the second half of 1944 came retreat across the Bug in the region around Chełm in Poland, followed by withdrawals over the Beskid range into Upper Silesia. After the Reich's capitulation between 8 and 13 May 1945, the survivors of the 253rd ID became prisoners of war of the Soviets near Havlíčkův Brod south of Prague.<sup>5</sup>

Including its various moves and the ground covered during operations, the division travelled between its formation in 1939 to its surrender in 1945 a distance of between 6,000 and 7,000 kilometres. From June 1941 to May 1945 it was in action for forty-seven months, though without being at any time wiped out or pulled back from the front line for rest and recuperation. In the course of the war the 253rd ID went through both a series of major battles and periods of less intense positional warfare. It was not only a fighting unit, but also part of the Wehrmacht's occupation structure in the operational area, and actively implicated in war crimes.<sup>6</sup> Given this background of operational history, structures, and social make-up it can be taken as an infantry division typical of the majority of large infantry formations during the Second World War.

The study of an infantry division has, as a basic rule, to take account of both components of large military formations, that is to say both field units and their associated replacement army units.<sup>7</sup> The two-part structure was basic to the functioning of the field army, since it not only provided for replacement of personnel in the numbers needed but also ensured the marked regional homogeneity among the members of individual units that was one of the central aims of personnel allocation in the Wehrmacht.<sup>8</sup> Moreover this widened view takes account of the soldiers' sense of belonging with an infantry division, as it embraced not only units in the field but those in the replacement units. There was between the two a brisk, numerically substantial, and continuous exchange of personnel, through training and the supplying of recruits and the administrative and welfare treatment of the wounded and their return to the field units.<sup>9</sup> The term 'divisional community' can be used to describe this structure.<sup>10</sup> The fact that up to 30 per cent of the personnel of the individual units in the division were with the associated replacement units, as recruits, troops on leave, or convalescent, emphasizes the importance of this two-part system.<sup>11</sup> The constant circulation of soldiers was the decisive link between the two parts

<sup>4</sup> See Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 386–402; see also Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1093–4, and Nolte, 'Osariči', 187–8.

<sup>5</sup> See concise account in Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, viii. 223–4.

<sup>6</sup> See Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 331–85.

<sup>7</sup> See Crevel, *Fighting Power*, 62–3; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 297–8; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 878–9, 1012–13.

<sup>8</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 20–1.

<sup>10</sup> See Crevel, *Fighting Power*, 56.

<sup>11</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Division Slice*, Study P-072, BA-MA ZA 1/1992, 13–14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 110.

of a division. This holds special importance for the analysis of those belonging to the division as members of a social group, since irrespective of their belonging to a field or replacement unit those belonging to a division always formed a *single* social subsystem within the Wehrmacht. Such a divisional community—here seen as the defining framework for the reality of life for those belonging to it—was never something static. As the war went on, its structures changed under the influence of a great many internal and external factors.

The field units of the 253rd ID were formed in accordance with the war-strength organization table (*Kriegsstärkenachweis*, KStN) applying to the 4th wave of mobilization.<sup>12</sup> Its original structure remained largely unchanged until the restructuring of Wehrmacht formations in 1942;<sup>13</sup> yet already by 1940 there was a substantial exchange of personnel taking place through the loss of discrete sub-units used to raise new units as part of fresh waves.<sup>14</sup> The gaps in the ranks this caused were however for the most part filled from their own replacement units, while the social and functional structure was able to regenerate during the months the division spent as occupation troops in France and in the preparations for Operation BARBAROSSA.<sup>15</sup> These losses were not followed by any further measures until after the failure of the German blitzkrieg strategy in the Soviet Union in the winter of 1941/2.<sup>16</sup> We can note several restructuring measures in 1942, 1943, and 1944, on the one hand aimed at helping to achieve a more efficient distribution of personnel. On the other the soldiers remaining in the weakened units were concentrated in an ever smaller number of combat units so as to reach a fighting strength that would allow the formations to be employed tactically.<sup>17</sup> Such changes were ultimately taken into account by the KStN for the 'type 1944 infantry division', which adapted the structure of infantry divisions to the situation on the ground in the final phase of the war.<sup>18</sup> On 1 November 1944 the 253rd ID, as its strength had again dropped and there was hardly any prospect of any large supply of replacements, was converted to a 'division combat group'.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of this, in the division's three infantry regiments between 1939 and 1945 only three out of nine battalions and one out of three regimental staffs belonged continuously to the same regiment. There are however exceptions

<sup>12</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, i. 45; *ibid.*, xv. 151–3.

<sup>13</sup> Transport return of 253rd ID to Transportkommandantur Paris Ost of 20 June 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 52; Kriegsgliederung der 253. ID, 21 June 1941, BA-MA RH/20 16 51.

<sup>14</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, x. 10, 253, xii. 279, and i. 204.

<sup>15</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1755, Frame 408.

<sup>16</sup> Zusammenlegung der Inf. Kp. [Amalgamation of inf. coy.], 9 Sept. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 17. See also Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 30–1.

<sup>17</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Das deutsche Heer*, iii. 62–3; Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, x. 205, 231, 253; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 886–7.

<sup>18</sup> BA-MA RH/20 9 196; BA-MA RH/24 23 161; 'Basic organizational changes', 4 Apr. 1943, BA-MA RH/24 39/125; see also the present author's Chapter II, n. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Telex from Pz. AOK 1, 1 Nov. 1944, BA-MA RH/24 24 313; 'Gliederung der Div.-Kampfgruppen' [Structure of division combat groups], 4 Nov. 1944, BA-MA RH/24 24 313; see also T-314, Film 735, Frame 230.



within this picture of constant change. On the one hand the need to keep the complex apparatus of military staffs at division command level permanently able to function allowed of only limited intervention in its organization. Interruptions in this area came about rather more through the sometimes rapid changes of personnel among the officers.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand the 253rd's engineer battalion, for example, was allowed to keep its organizational structure after giving up a company in November 1940. Similarly, that of the 253rd's signals section remained unaltered throughout the war.<sup>21</sup> The high priority given to the undisturbed availability of military services from these units came before any relief of manning-level problems that might be achieved. A further aspect of the structural change that developed during the battles on the eastern front was the raising of auxiliary formations designed to make up for a shortage of German troops in the Wehrmacht. The use of Soviet prisoners of war and civilians as a labour force by the advancing German army units had already begun in 1941. As the war went on they gradually became established parts of the divisions who maintained, at varying strengths, their own eastern-personnel companies or battalions, anti-partisan units, and civilian labour units or companies. At the same time almost every subsection of a division had a varying number of *Hilfs*—foreign auxiliaries in the German army, with non-combatant roles—the use of whom freed Wehrmacht soldiers for active combat.<sup>22</sup> This practice made Soviet citizens of both sexes, who voluntarily or under pressure put themselves at the service of the Wehrmacht, into part of military society. They could, if we consider only the number of *Hilfs* in the KStN plan, make up more than 10 per cent of an infantry division's total strength. In the 'new style' infantry regiments in being from 1944 on, the proportion of *Hilfs* was indeed almost one-fifth.<sup>23</sup> Between 1942 and 1945, the 253rd ID at all times had civilian and paramilitary auxiliary formations, including civilian labour units consisting at times of several thousand men and women.<sup>24</sup>

This pattern of movement had a number of consequences in the social and structural environment of soldiers whose parent division did not change, although their units was at the same time undergoing constant changes of location within the military organization. A central point of reference was the company or the social groupings that formed below this level. During restructurings, the troops were—in so far as the military situation permitted—moved together with their social milieu, as it were as coherent tactical and social groups. Alongside this, the division itself provided an identifying feature; for regardless of all internal changes, belonging to the 253rd ID

<sup>20</sup> On this see Chapter III. 6(a) of this section.

<sup>21</sup> Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, viii. 227. On this see Chapter III. 5(g) of this section.

<sup>22</sup> See Müller, 'Menschenjagd', 92–102; Sokolow, 'Der Preis des Sieges', 521–37, here 526.

<sup>23</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, xv. 154–5; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1028, 1052–6. The numbers in the local auxiliary formations in an army corps could, by 1943 at the latest, match the strength of an average infantry division. In the case of XXXIX Panzer Corps, for example, see BA-MA RH/24 39 117, assessment of the supply situation on 30 Apr. 1943; also NARA, T-314, Film 1438, Frame 990. <sup>24</sup> See Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil, 366–7.

remained a constant. The levels in between, of belonging to a regiment or to a battalion, can on the other hand have played only a subsidiary role.<sup>25</sup> This is borne out, too, by the statements of former German soldiers interviewed for the index of returnees. Their subjective perception is mirrored in the fact that when giving details of the units they were attached to they frequently subsumed numerous moves within the division's overall formation, and even periods of absence, under their belonging to their division.<sup>26</sup>

Organizational changes however affected not only the field army, but the replacement army as well. This part of the Wehrmacht at first expanded in parallel with the growth of the field army, was in 1941 made ready for a war against the Soviet Union, and had just like the field army to adapt to the unexpected effects of this war before itself, in the closing phase of the war, being drawn ever more into the fighting.<sup>27</sup> The field units of the 253rd ID had linked to them, at the time they were formed, specific replacement units under the aegis of the commander of replacement troops in military district VI.<sup>28</sup> The latter consisted partly of units that formed a central source of personnel replacements for special branches of the services, but partly of units that had been newly created to support the 253rd ID.<sup>29</sup> After a short-term move to military district XX in order to clear the way in the west of Germany for the Wehrmacht's deployment,<sup>30</sup> it returned to the Cologne area in August 1940.<sup>31</sup> The 253rd ID's replacement units were for the most part stationed in the area between Dortmund, Cologne, and Aachen, and initially still placed under the 156th (later the 526th) Division.<sup>32</sup> Their headquarters were first at Aachen, but were shifted to Wuppertal in 1943; this had no effect on the stationing and composition of the 253rd ID's replacement units. Their structure remained largely unchanged until September 1944, since the 526th Division did not implement the physical separation of replacement and training units that was carried out in parts of the Wehrmacht in 1942.<sup>33</sup>

When in September 1944 the western front drew back ever closer to the 526th Division's garrisons, the replacement units of the 253rd ID were mobilized to go into action.<sup>34</sup> They first manned the West Wall defences between

<sup>25</sup> See Schneider, *Reaktionen*, 57–8.

<sup>26</sup> See Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 37.

<sup>27</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 830–1, 966–7, 1100–1; *ibid.*, v/II. 878–9, 1012–13. Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 20, 42.

<sup>28</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, viii. 223–4; Müller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer*, i. 83.

<sup>29</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, xi. 75–6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 128–9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. 97–8.

<sup>32</sup> Military district VI HQ, 'Command structure and location of replacement troops in military district VI', 19 Nov. 1940, BA-MA RH/25 156 TU 0184/8; see Haak, *Aachens Garnisonsgeschichte*, 58–9; Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, i. 131–2; Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 91–2, 110.

<sup>33</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 889; Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, xi. 75–6; Haak, *Aachens Garnisonsgeschichte*, 59–65. Some of the Wehrmacht's training units were moved to occupied areas, in order to lessen the load on the occupation troops there.

<sup>34</sup> See Bergen, 526th Replacement Division and 476 Replacement Division, Study B-210, 5, BA-MA ZA 1/559; Mattenklott, *Rheinland 15.9.1944–21.3.1945*, Study B-044, 5, BA-MA ZA 1/382.

Aachen and Scheiden, where they took part in the battles around Aachen and in the Hürtgen Forest.<sup>35</sup> Parts of these units were wiped out there, while others were moved to the Wuppertal area and were not deployed in various front-line positions until the spring of 1945.<sup>36</sup>

The divisional community thus consisted of a relatively dynamic and a static system, both of them closely linked organizationally and in terms of personnel. In the field units, structural changes were frequent at all levels and all phases of the war, including those in processes affecting the social make-up. On the other hand the replacement units, as a manpower-resources base, showed a greater degree of structural stability right up to the closing phase of the war.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT IN PERSONNEL STRENGTH

A study of how personnel numbers in Wehrmacht units developed during the Second World War is bedevilled with a great deal of uncertainty, and made very difficult on the one hand by the Wehrmacht's reporting system becoming increasingly inconsistent as the war progressed, and on the other by the disparate availability of sources due to the loss and destruction of documents. There is an additional problem in defining the personnel strengths themselves. The Wehrmacht distinguished between trench strength (*Grabenstärke*), combat strength (*Gefechtsstärke*), and ration strength (*Verpflegungsstärke*).<sup>37</sup> On top of these, from 1942 at the latest, one has to take account of the 'indigenous auxiliaries' in 'eastern units' or 'labour service sections'.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the 253rd ID the strength returns available allow a conservative reconstruction of the numbers of regular Wehrmacht troops in its various units over the war years, which shows that the manning situation was considerably better up to 1942 than between 1942 and 1945.<sup>39</sup>

As may be seen from Diagram II.B.III.I, the division was up to June 1941 fully manned, showing in March 1940 its highest ever personnel strength at 17,053 troops.<sup>40</sup> The relatively high losses in the opening phase of Operation BARBAROSSA had by November 1941 already reduced the ration strength to 14,623, despite continuous replacements.<sup>41</sup> This corresponds to a deficit after losses and replacements of 1,571 men, or a reduction in personnel strength of

<sup>35</sup> See Bergen, 526th Replacement Division and 476 Replacement Division, Study B-210, 5, BA-MA ZA 1/559; Mattenklott, Rheinland 15.9.1944-21.3.1945, Study B-044, 5, BA-MA ZA 1/382. 3, 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> See Bergen, 526th Replacement Division and 476 Replacement Division, Study B-210, 6, 9-10, 30, 33, BA-MA ZA 1/559; Rush, *Hürtgen Forest*, 59-60, 66-7.

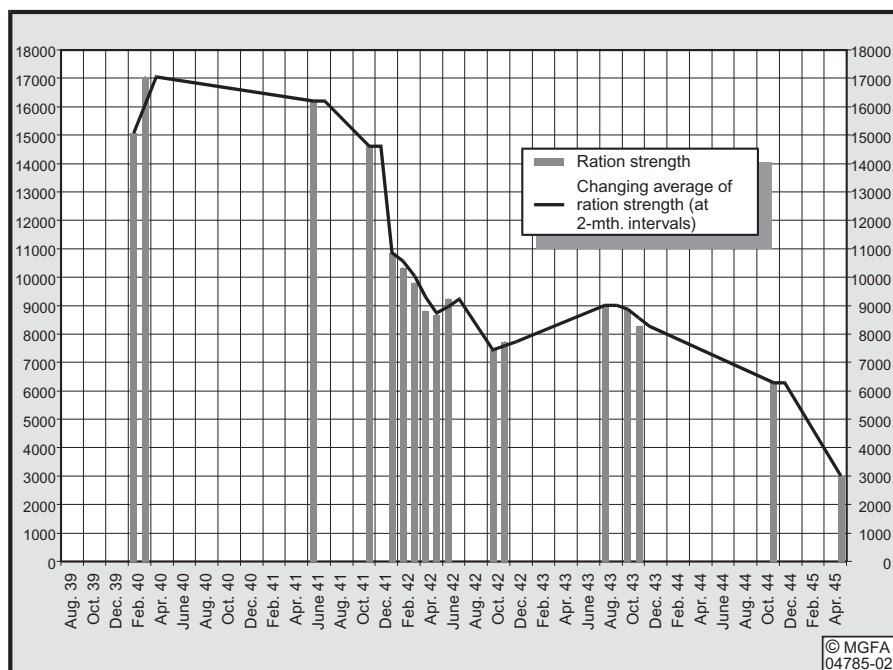
<sup>37</sup> Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 11-19; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 897, 1038.

<sup>38</sup> BA-ZNS, Drucksachen, OKH GenStdH/Org.Abt (III) No. 8000/42 geh. 'Verfügung über Landeseigene Hilfskräfte im Osten' [access to indigenous auxiliaries in the east]. See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, xxii. 22, No. 29, 103-4. See also Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, xv. 155-6.

<sup>39</sup> A list of the strength returns used in this analysis can be found in Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 434-5.

<sup>40</sup> Ration strength on 17 Mar. 1940, BA-MA RH/26 253 9; transport return for 20 June 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 5.

<sup>41</sup> Strength return on 16 Nov. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 53.



Source: BA-MA RH 26 253

DIAGRAM II.B.III.1. Ration strength of 253rd Infantry Division, 1939–1945

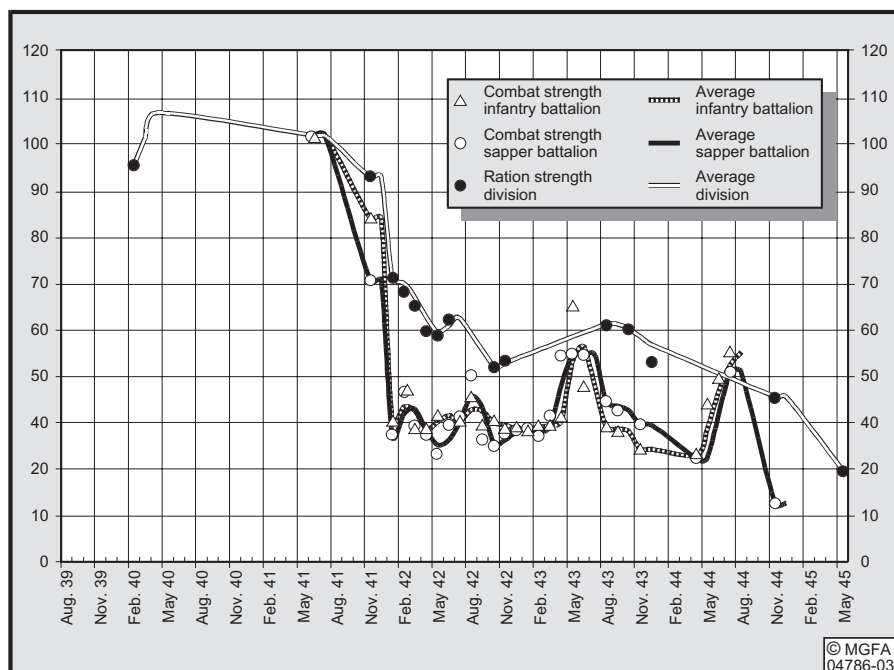
around 10 per cent. The division took a dramatic beating during the Soviet counter-offensive to the west of Moscow from December 1941. When the situation had stabilized again by May 1942 its units' monthly average strength was 8,671 men.<sup>42</sup> After the Wehrmacht's first major defeat of the war against the Soviet Union in the winter of 1942, personnel numbers had thus fallen to about half their original level.<sup>43</sup> Over the rest of 1942 they fluctuated as units were topped up and then again decimated. For 1943 to 1945 figures to show how the overall strength developed are sparse, though from the data available it can be concluded that the division's strength stabilized at between 7,000 and 9,000 troops, and did not begin to fall again until the second half of 1944 to around 6,000.<sup>44</sup> After the ties with the replacement army were severed at the end of 1944 losses could ultimately be made up for only by incorporating other units locally, such that in the final months of the war the division dwindled to an estimated 3,000–4,000 men.<sup>45</sup> By the end of the war, therefore, the 253rd ID had less than a quarter of the number of men it started out with.

<sup>42</sup> This number is calculated from the strength returns for May 1942.

<sup>43</sup> Strength return for 13 Mar. 1942, RH 26 253 25; NARA, T-314, Film 681, Frame 255–6.

<sup>44</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, Division Slice, Study P-072, BA-MA ZA 1/1992, 13; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1035–6.

<sup>45</sup> A number estimated from the index of returnees and MIA list.



Source: BA-MA RH 26 253

DIAGRAM II.B.III.2. Indices of personnel strength (May 1941 = 100)

The military value of the division was however affected by other factors besides its personnel strength: first of all, an infantry division often had military units under it that did not belong to the division itself, but which boosted its fighting ability. Secondly, internal moves of personnel within the division from support to combat units, and the thinning out of the central supply services and their decentralized dispersion to the combat units, led to an agglomeration of personnel there.<sup>46</sup> Thirdly, the lack of German soldiers was increasingly made up for with Soviet prisoners of war or civilians.<sup>47</sup> The 'regular' personnel of the 253rd ID did, it is true, also have quite long less stressful periods after the mauling in the winter of 1941–2, but the proportion they represented of the division's total numbers shrank appreciably when subordinated units and Soviet auxiliaries are taken into account.

This tendency becomes clear when the indicated figure for the division's ration strength is compared with the combat strength of the fighting units. Diagram II.B.III.2, first shows the markedly higher losses among fighting units in the winter of 1941/2, seen against the division's total strength. Their combat strength dropped by almost 70 index points, while the division's ration strength fell over the first months of 1942 to only about half its original level.

<sup>46</sup> Strength return for 31 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 54; strength return for 28 Nov. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 33.

<sup>47</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 684, Frame 1228.

Later during 1942 the reduction in ration strength continued while at the same time the combat strength numbers had already stabilized. This indicates the shift of manpower from the rear-area services into the combat units by means of which the Wehrmacht was trying to maintain the front-line units' readiness for action.<sup>48</sup> In 1942–3 the pattern stayed almost the same. The sharply rising losses in action in 1944 are evidence of a final, more substantial bringing up of replacements, coupled with the restructuring into a 'type 1944 division'. The returns from the 253rd's engineer battalion, which are among the last available for individual formations, bear out the renewed heavy casualties up to the end of the war—in November 1944 the combat strength of this battalion was down to 14 per cent of its original level. We see quite clearly the development in personnel levels that has already been sketched out: after a first, drastic reduction in the winter of 1941/2 there was a more stable phase that lasted almost three years, which slid in the latter half of 1944 into the period of continuous heavy losses during the war's closing months.

A second important aspect of the development in personnel levels is the number of soldiers who belonged to the 253rd ID between 1939 and 1945.<sup>49</sup> In working to arrive at an accurate figure it has to be kept in mind that the casualties included both those killed and missing, and those wounded. While the first two categories meant the definitive loss of an individual to the Wehrmacht's ranks, the wounded remained, to begin with, within the military system. If they did not subsequently die or become unfit for service as a result of their injuries, they returned to the Wehrmacht, in many instances to their old unit. A distinction must therefore be made between how many *soldier-units* and how many individuals a division had.<sup>50</sup>

An approximate figure for the first of these can be arrived at from the initial and final size of the division and the total number of casualties occurring during the war.<sup>51</sup> Data on the size of the 253rd ID before the first casualties in May 1940 yield an average starting figure of 16,065 men. On the basis of the index of returnees and the list of those posted missing in action, the size of the 253rd at the time it surrendered can be put at around 3,500 men.<sup>52</sup> The casualty records for the 253rd ID show 31,015 killed in action, wounded, and missing in action. From these framework data it appears that, considering

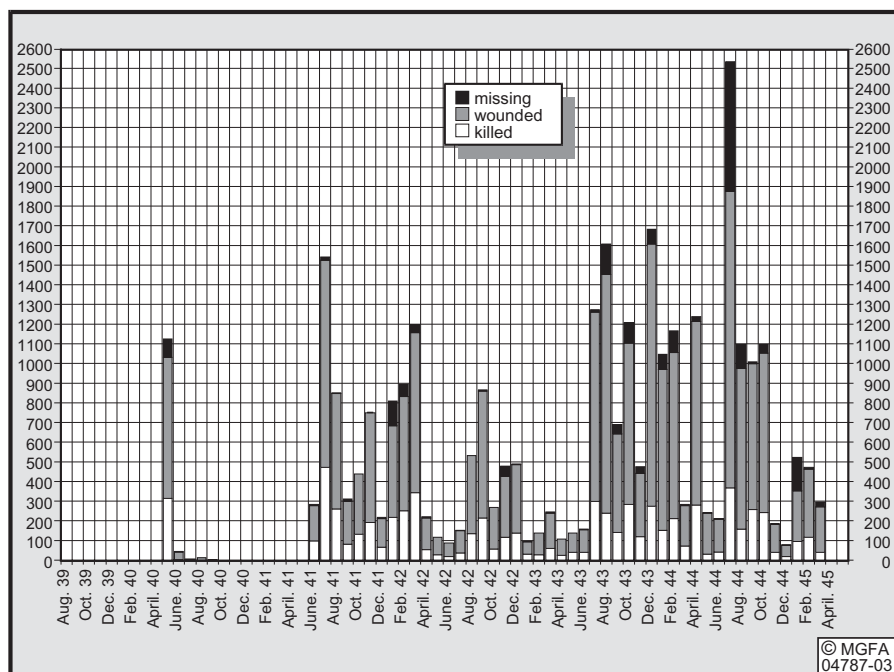
<sup>48</sup> See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, iv, No. 43, 100–1.

<sup>49</sup> So far research has provided only very unprecise and indifferentiated estimates, see Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, 12–13; id., *Hitler's Army*, 57–8.

<sup>50</sup> A 'soldier-unit' is the presence of a soldier during a period of service with the 253rd ID. A soldier might complete several periods of service with the field units. In doing so, he counts as an individual, but can represent several soldier-units.

<sup>51</sup> The figures put forward in what follows must be seen as approximations.

<sup>52</sup> The index of returnees holds details of soldiers coming back from captivity as prisoners of war, and gives the date on which they were taken prisoner. The present estimate considers all entries showing capture in 1945. The MIA list features only soldiers whose fate was still unknown after the POWs had returned; the two lists thus do not overlap. All the entries in the MIA list were considered that showed a soldier being posted as missing in 1945. Since the DDSt casualty documents in most cases go only up to the end of 1944, it can be assumed that a large proportion of those killed in 1945 were included in the list of the missing.



Source: Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt), 253rd ID loss returns, 1939–1945

DIAGRAM II.B.III.3. Losses in 253rd Infantry Division, 1939–1945

the initial and final size of the formation, replacement personnel numbering 18,450 had to be brought up to cover these losses.

The sum of *soldier-units* passing through the division can be arrived at from the division's initial size and the replacement numbers, and amounts to around 34,500 such units. It was one of the basic principles of the Wehrmacht's allocation of replacements that wounded men should after convalescence be as far as possible posted back to their original units.<sup>53</sup> The question then arises of how high a proportion of the replacements these men returning to their previous units represented, and how many individuals were consequently needed to make up the numbers required. To answer this the number of those killed and missing has to be separated from the number of wounded. For the 253rd ID it is possible to show 2,145 missing, 6,928 killed, and 21,942 wounded. The calculations done by the Wehrmacht for its personnel planning show that of those wounded 70 per cent were after convalescence classified as again fit for service in the field.<sup>54</sup> This corresponds to 15,359 soldiers again available

<sup>53</sup> In October 1942, in the 253rd ID's area, 80 per cent of those wounded returned to their old units, while 20 per cent were used to form the nucleus of newly raised units. see NARA, T-314, Film 685, Frame 388.

<sup>54</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 148–9, 159; Crevel, *Fighting Power*, 97–9. For a comparison with the Red Army in WW2 see Erickson, 'Red Army', 245.



for front-line duties. More than half of the 253rd ID's wounded who became again fit for service were within six months of being wounded posted out of the division to other Wehrmacht units, so that there remained in the personnel replacements to the division some 7,525 men, or 49 per cent of the wounded restored to fit-for-service health, who had been posted back to the division's field units at least once.<sup>55</sup> An approximate value for the number of individuals who became members of the 253rd ID between 1939 and 1945 can thus be put at around 27,040 men.

### 3. MILITARY CASUALTIES AND REPLACEMENTS

The most important factors determining the social change in the personnel of a division were military casualties and replacements of personnel. The term 'military casualties' covers those changes in personnel strength brought about by soldiers being killed, wounded, or taken prisoner during combat. Postings or detachments due for example to illness, training, restructuring, or discharge are left out of consideration, since they are only very inadequately documented; and the transfers of personnel that these occasion are, compared to the military casualties, not so numerous that disregarding them would distort the results to any serious extent.

Using the sources to hand it is possible to reconstruct the development in military casualties from 1939 to 1945.<sup>56</sup> The casualty records have a total of 31,015 men killed, wounded, or missing to be counted as military casualties of the 253rd ID. Diagram II.B.III.3, shows how these were distributed over the period of action for the three categories. Two phases can be seen between 1941 and 1945. From June 1941 to mid-1943 there was a lessening casualty rate compared to that at the start of the campaign; over this time months with high losses were followed by periods with fewer. From June 1943 casualties showed a constantly rising trend, and thenceforth months with below-average casualty figures were increasingly rare.

From the breakdown of casualties as killed, wounded, or missing in Table II.B.III.1 we can arrive at a ratio of about 7:3 between soldiers wounded and those permanently lost to the division. In general it can be noted that the proportion of permanent losses regularly rose in the winter months and apart from this was at its highest during periods of greater combat activity, though without over the long term varying from the average. The 9,073 dead or missing were equivalent, assuming a total strength of around 27,000, to roughly

<sup>55</sup> Analysis yields a proportion of troops wounded or discharged, with sampling at 30, 60, 90, 120, 150, and 180 days after the injury, or for the total time between the occurrence of the wounding and the discharge of the soldier, which with troops whose fate could be determined lay between 47 and 55 per cent with the mean at 51 per cent. In the US army the equivalent figure for infantry divisions was 45 per cent, see Stouffer, *The American Soldier* (1949), 103.

<sup>56</sup> Activity report II a/b 11 Apr. 1941–2 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 12; activity report II a/b 3 Dec. 1941–13 Apr. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 21; activity report II a/b 14 Apr. 1942–31 Dec. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 47; activity report II a/b 1 Jan. 1943–30 June 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 48; DDSt, casualty records for 253rd ID.

TABLE II.B.III.I. *Killed, wounded, and missing*

	Casualties	Killed		Wounded		Missing	
		Total	per cent	Total	per cent	Total	per cent
Grenadier Regiment 453	9,187	2,039	22.2	6,572	71.5	576	6.3
Grenadier Regiment 464	10,303	2,181	21.2	7,376	71.6	746	7.2
Grenadier Regiment 473	4,480	1,169	26.1	3,161	70.6	150	3.3
Sapper Battalion 253	1,065	279	26.2	725	68.1	61	5.7
Divisional Battalion 253	1,664	311	18.7	1,104	66.3	249	15.0
Reconnaissance Battalion 253	329	115	35.0	203	61.7	11	3.3
Anti-tank Battalion 253	973	262	26.9	642	66.0	69	7.1
Artillery Regiment 253	2,444	443	18.1	1,831	74.9	170	7.0
Field Replmt. Battn. 253	321	77	24.0	198	61.7	46	14.3
Signals Battalion 253	161	38	23.6	112	69.6	11	6.8
Divisions supply troops	77	10	13.0	14	18.2	53	68.8
Staff	11	4	36.4	4	36.4	3	27.3
Total	31,015	6,928	22.3	21,942	70.8	2,145	6.9

one-third of the division's personnel. This figure lies—as might be expected with a combat unit—somewhat above the average level of permanent losses calculated for the Wehrmacht as a whole, at close on 28 per cent.<sup>57</sup> This is confirmed by an analysis of the identity tag registers. For all twelve infantry companies of the 453rd Regiment, for instance, we find an average of 32 per cent killed and missing among the casualties from 1939 to 1945. If the 13th and 14th companies are included the figure drops by one percentage point, and if the staff personnel are taken into account then it falls to barely 29 per cent.<sup>58</sup>

Besides the macroperspective of the monthly casualties between 1939 and 1945, understanding social change also needs the microperspective of day-to-day developments that ultimately result in the monthly losses. Analysis of a sample of daily returns for the 253rd ID from 20 October 1941 to 26 June 1942 shows that the losses each day were far from evenly spread, but occurred in peaks dictated by offensive and defensive operations.<sup>59</sup> In between these there could be phases lasting up to several weeks in which the 253rd ID's casualties were minimal. At times of low casualties, often involving days with no casualties at all or less than five wounded and/or killed (and these spread across the several thousand members of the division), there were no serious intrusions on the units' social fabric. The development was thus marked not only from month

<sup>57</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 243–4.

<sup>58</sup> DDSt, identity tag registers of 453 IR.

<sup>59</sup> The figures for the period 30 Sept. 1941–29 Oct. 1941: NARA, T-314 Film 104, Frame 1400–1; 4 Nov. 1941–12 Jan. 1942: NARA, T-314, Film 680, Frame 1402–3; 30 Jan. 1942–31 Mar. 1942: NARA, T-314, Film 681, Frame 541–2; 1 Apr.–27 June 1942: NARA, T-314, Film 683, Frame 400–1.

to month but in day-to-day experience as well by two extremes—times when there were no major operations under way and positional warfare claimed only a few victims, alternating with periods of intense fighting and suddenly rocketing casualty figures. The different types of unit within the division accounted for a widely varying share in the overall casualties, and the distribution of this can also be seen from Table II.B.III.1.<sup>60</sup> The combat troops, who according to the KStN applying in 1939 made up around 87 per cent of the division's strength, and in the KStN for a '1944-style division' still about 84 per cent, suffered 99 per cent of all casualties; meanwhile the support units, representing over the same period between 12 and 16 per cent, accounted for only 1 per cent.<sup>61</sup> Differences can also be seen among the combat units themselves. The share of the casualties taken by the infantry regiments, in particular, was at 77 per cent appreciably higher than their proportion of the division's total numbers which ranged between 56 per cent in 1939 and 53 per cent according to the war establishment strength table for 1944. On the other hand the artillery regiment, whose proportion of the division's personnel dropped from 19 per cent in 1939 to around 16 per cent in 1944, accounted for only 8 per cent of the overall casualties. The relative casualty rates for different units depended greatly on how direct or indirect, and more or less intensive, their involvement in the fighting was. The infantry formations carried the main burden, and were surpassed only by the reconnaissance section and anti-tank units, who because of their often hazardous or exposed activities suffered the proportionally highest casualties. The artillerymen, on the other hand, who in their primary function were less exposed to intensive fire, were only exceptionally used in an infantry role. The supply and administrative units, finally, were involved in combat primarily when there was a military crisis; in the main they occasionally suffered murderous casualties when there were partisan attacks in the division's rear area.

This uneven pattern of changes in personnel, brought about by the casualty and replacement structure, is an important indicator for the forming of areas of differing social stability. Because of their duties and the conditions in which they operated, some units had to cope with casualties out of proportion to their share in the division's overall numbers, and consequently also underwent a substantial fluctuation in their personnel. Others, meanwhile, had fewer casualties compared to their strength and can therefore be assumed to have enjoyed a greater measure of social continuity.<sup>62</sup>

The second factor influencing the change in social composition, personnel replacement, also needs to be looked at in a multifaceted way. The calculation on which this is based shows that in the course of the war around 18,450 men were posted to the 253rd Infantry Division as replacements, about 40 per cent of whom were convalescents who had belonged to the division's field units

<sup>60</sup> In percentages of total casualties, see Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 98; Crevelde, *Fighting Power*, 54.

<sup>61</sup> See Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, xv. 151–4.

<sup>62</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 89.

before they were wounded. We then have to discover what proportion of the replacement personnel actually came from the 253rd ID's replacement and training unit, and how the supply of replacement troops changed in terms of quantities and structure in the course of the war. A distinction has first to be made, in several periods, between the personnel coming from the division's own replacement units and those drafted in from other field or replacement units. From mid-1941 to around July 1942 the replacement troops were provided in line with the allocation principle originally followed by the Wehrmacht. At irregular intervals the division received 'convalescent companies', in which troops who had recovered from their wounds were returned to combat duty. Trained recruits, on the other hand, joined the troops in the field in transfer or field replacement battalions.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, it happened that because of availability and the military situation replacement troops that had been intended for other formations, and consequently did not come from the division's own replacement units, were diverted to join the 253rd ID. In mid-1942 the replacement system was changed to match the altered structure of the replacement army, under which convalescent and training companies were organizationally separated from each other. Where—as with the 253rd ID—training and convalescent units were however stationed at the same place, the replacements were now supplied with the convalescent transfer companies, comprising both recruits and convalescents.<sup>64</sup> These companies were identified with a number made up of the military district dispatching them, the division receiving them, and a serial—e.g. convalescent transfer company VI/253/1. This numbering was continued to the end of the war, so that these units can be kept track of without a break up to January 1945. The last convalescent transfer company, which reached the 253rd ID in early 1945, bore the number VI/253/40. This continuously maintained system for supplying personnel replacements became the backbone for the division's capability to operate.<sup>65</sup> Alongside it there was, as before, the irregular provision of personnel replacements from other units. An analysis of the men reaching Grenadier Regiment 453 from such sources does not allow any conclusion as to the make-up of these components of personnel replacement.<sup>66</sup> After June 1941, replacement outside that planned was not continuous, but rather concentrated at particular moments; the peaks were in mid-1942, mid-1943, and mid-1944, thus coinciding with the rises in personnel strength found in Diagram II.B.III.2. This suggests that the regular replacement was at most enough to make up partly for current casualties, thus slowing down the process of contraction. Building up troop numbers was however possible only by providing additional personnel. The list of units involved shows besides that up to October 1943 personnel replacement from outside

<sup>63</sup> See Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 75–6.

<sup>64</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 889–90; Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 58.

<sup>65</sup> BA-ZNS, Ordensabteilung [decorations section] P5 (10), letter from AOK 18, 21 Sept. 1944.

<sup>66</sup> DDSt, identity tag registers of 453 IR.

the division came from replacement army formations, with the great majority of these being, like the 253rd ID's replacement units, still stationed in military district VI. From October 1943, replacement troops from outside the division began to come predominantly from parts of the field army that were no longer drawn from the division's core recruiting catchment area. This reflects the practice, which became increasingly common in the second half of the war, of units that had suffered such heavy casualties that they were no longer capable of operating on their own being sent to still-functioning formations to stiffen the latter.<sup>67</sup> Final clues to personnel replacement are found in the index of returnees and the surviving casualty returns for the year 1945. Shortly before the war ended, any relief through a regular replacement of troops had come to a standstill. The last convalescent transfer company from the 253rd ID's replacement units had reached the units in the field in January 1945, and the replacement units themselves had by then ceased to exist in their original form. Nor is there for these months any longer evidence of a meaningful inflow of personnel from other field units. Instead the newcomers during the closing phase included, besides a series of individual transfers from combat units deployed close to the 253rd ID, a number of German forest protection squads and sections of the German border guard.<sup>68</sup>

The relative numbers of other-ranks replacements from personnel coming from inside and outside the division can be gauged on the basis of approximate data. From April 1941 to May 1943 the flow of replacement troops was demonstrably uninterrupted.<sup>69</sup> Over that period the division received a total of 10,584 men as replacements; of these, 7,898 came from the division's own replacement units, while 2,595 were from units outside it. The two groups were thus in a ratio of 3:1. At the same time the average strength of convalescent transfer companies, which from July 1942 to December 1944 were a source of replacements from the division's replacement units, was around 200 men.<sup>70</sup> Taking this average as a basis, and considering the 25 convalescent transfer companies whose arrival in the division is documented while their individual numbers are not known, we find the personnel replacements up to January 1945 from the division's own replacement units to have been roughly 13,500 men; working on the assumed ratio of 3:1, these could have been matched by around 4,500 men from units outside the division. The resulting total of about 18,000 replacement troops for the period April 1941 to December 1944 lies close to the figure obtained from the previous calculations. As according to these findings 7,252 of the replacements were wounded men who had previously served with the 253rd ID and under the division's replacement system were after recovery being posted back to their field units,

<sup>67</sup> Return for 9 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 70.

<sup>68</sup> German Red Cross tracing service, returnees index for IR 473; DDSt, casualty records for IR 473.

<sup>69</sup> See n. 56 above.

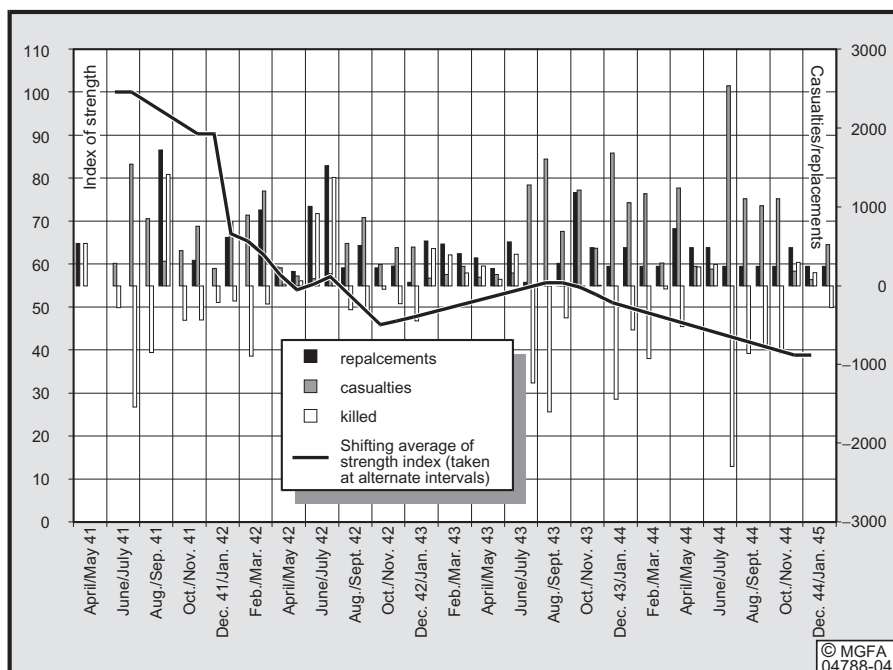
<sup>70</sup> This figure is arrived at as an average for the fifteen convalescent transfer companies whose strength between July 1942 and October 1943 can be found in the papers of the 253rd ID. On this see also Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 76; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, ii, No. 70, 69.

the replacements to the division included some 6,200 newly trained recruits.<sup>71</sup> Given the approximate figures arrived at for the proportion of convalescents among the replacement troops, the replacements from within the division's own structure were thus more or less equally divided between newly trained recruits and convalescents being returned to their field units. After the organizational change over in the replacement system from providing quite large numbers in transfer battalions—the practice that predominated between April 1941 and July 1942—to making up convalescent transfer companies of about 200 men each at much shorter intervals, these reached the division about once every three weeks. Replacements from outside the division were shipped in at particular times, presumably to boost the numbers; they represented about a quarter of the total replacements and thus brought no great change to the regional or socio-cultural character of the division, especially since most of them likewise came from military district VI. The interplay between casualty and replacement figures and the effect this had on how the 253rd ID changed between April 1941 and December 1944 is illustrated in Diagram II.B.III.4. The monthly outturn in the fluctuation in personnel numbers is mirrored in the changes in ration strength. Periods of intense combat, during which hardly any replacements were brought up to the division, were regularly followed by calmer periods during which the outturn might remain positive for several months on end; the division's strength rose accordingly. Only from the end of 1943 did the numbers finally go into a steady decline; not until the middle of 1944, however, did they drop to below the low point reached in 1942.

A decisive influence was exerted on this, from the start of the war to the end of 1944, by 253rd ID's replacement organization, the core of which lay in the division's dedicated replacement units. These could supply up to three-quarters of the replacement personnel, and thus guarantee an influx of soldiers having a social profile with the same regional stamp as the majority of the troops in the division, and who had moreover already undergone their military socialization in units of the 253rd ID. It is therefore of major importance, for the social profile and in particular for social cohesion within the primary groups,<sup>72</sup> that the structures of the replacement system were able up to the end of 1944 to have a stabilizing influence on the homogeneity of the personnel of the 253rd ID's field units. Seen against the background of almost continuously falling manpower numbers, the inadequacy of the Wehrmacht's replacement organization in supplying the numbers needed—bearing in mind too its high casualty rate—by now becomes evident. After 1941/2 it was no longer capable of raising the fighting power of the field units to any major extent even though the total strength of the Wehrmacht was still increasing, since with rapidly rising casualties the troops available were being spread among units the number of which was also increasing. It does however seem to have been able to do

<sup>71</sup> Assessment of fighting capabilities of divisions, 25 Mar. 1944, BA-MA RH/20 9 200.

<sup>72</sup> See the present author's Chapter I, n. 15.



Source: BA-MA RH 26 253

DIAGRAM II.B.III.4. Overall balance of casualties and replacements, 1941–1945

enough, following the massive losses in the first months of the war against the Soviet Union, to keep the manning of formations at the level reached in 1942 until the middle of 1944. The 253rd ID did, during the period from May 1941 to late December 1944, receive on average around 390 replacement troops a month (though this pattern was not constant); against these, however, there were 644 casualties over the same period.

#### 4. THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF NCOs AND OTHER RANKS

A study of social composition based on the premiss that there is a connection between the social profile of a group and its behaviour can make use of denominational, regional, economic, cultural, and class-specific indicators, the combination of which describe the social and moral milieu of social groups.<sup>73</sup> Reconstructing the social profile of the 253rd ID makes use of the data available from personnel records, and explains the process of change in it by sequential analysis, taking socially specific and chronological random samples.

<sup>73</sup> See Lepsius, 'Sozialstruktur', 382–3; Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 223–5; Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 40–1; Bald, *Der deutsche Offizier*, 38–9, 101–2; Banach, *Heydrichs Elite*, 35–6; Braun, 'Rationale Akteure', 41.



(a) *Age Structure*

The members of the 253rd ID can first be divided in accordance with their age structure into generation types which, through belonging to certain age groups, display similar socialization and life-experience features.<sup>74</sup> Diagram II.B.III.5 shows the distribution of the age groups in the sample without chronological differentiation. The range of births covers the years between 1897 and 1926, a span of about thirty years. The oldest of the men in the division's other ranks whose personnel records have been examined was one Karl Pickardt, born on 19 January 1897 in Wuppertal-Barmen. At the age of 18 he began his military service in 1915 during the First World War, which for him ended only in 1919 after his taking part in battles in the Baltic region. After a apprenticeship in commerce—probably in his father's business—he switched in the end to dentistry, in which he was practising when the war began in 1939. He was, as a 42-year-old reservist, called up on 29 August 1939 and posted to the 253rd ID, to whose field hospital he belonged—no doubt employed in line with his professional qualifications—until the end of 1942. After a stay in hospital in October that year, and by that time promoted to *Feldwebel* (senior NCO), he left the field army and served in various replacement army medical establishments, until trace of him is lost in mid-1943.<sup>75</sup> The youngest soldier in the random sample was Edmund von D., born on 14 September 1926 and the son of a miner from Gelsenkirchen-Buer. After joining the Hitler Youth at the age of 10 in 1936 and after leaving secondary school (thus already during the war) he began an precision-engineering apprenticeship, entered the Wehrmacht at the age of 17 in March 1944, and trained for some five months in the signals section of an artillery school unit; in September 1944, shortly before his 18th birthday, he was posted to the artillery regiment of the 253rd ID on the eastern front. In March 1945 he was awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class, while serving with the regiment's No. 4 battery; after this final sign of life his further fate is unknown.<sup>76</sup>

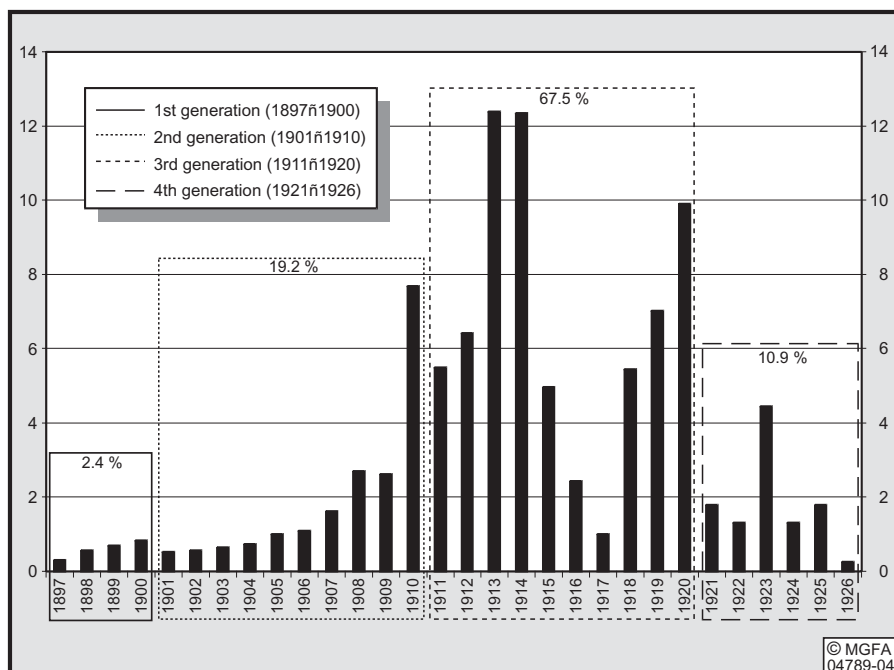
Overall, the age pyramid of the division's personnel shows four generation types: the age-group class from 1897 to 1900, at 2.4 per cent, includes only a very small percentage of the 253rd ID's NCOs and other ranks; its members had grown up in the *Kaiserreich*, and some of them had already been in the First World War. The 1901–10 age group, accounting for 19.2 per cent, represent the 'remnants' from the final *Kaiserreich* generation;<sup>77</sup> the oldest among them had lived through and been aware of the end of the Great War, while for the younger ones the war was no more than a childhood memory. Because of their age this generation could have however been involved in the political and socio-cultural events of the Weimar Republic. The 1911–20 class makes

<sup>74</sup> See Jaeger, 'Generationen in der Geschichte', 447–8; Kater, 'Generationskonflikt', 217–18; Banach, *Heydrichs Elite*, 58–9.

<sup>75</sup> BA-ZNS, WStB [Wehrstammbuch] Karl Pickardt, ID -306377545.

<sup>76</sup> BA-ZNS, WStB Edmund von D., ID -413357842. The soldier's surname has been anonymized for data-protection legislation reasons.

<sup>77</sup> See Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 14 ff.

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Source: BA-ZNS. Data from a sample of 2,291 service record books of members of 253rd ID.

DIAGRAM II.B.III.5. Age structure of sample in per cent ( $n = 2,291$ )

up 67.5 per cent of the study group; for the older among these their experience of life started in the second half of the Weimar Republic, for the younger the part of life that marks socialization already shifts more into the early years of the Third Reich. Those belonging to the 1921-6 age group (accounting for 11 per cent) already lived the greater part of their youth, and most of all their upbringing in school and out of school, under National Socialism.<sup>78</sup> The distribution of birth years across the study group thus broadly matches the age pyramid that can be seen generally in the army between 1939 and 1945.<sup>79</sup>

Besides this view, which is not differentiated any further chronologically, it is the way the age pyramid changed over the course of the Second World War that is mainly of importance. From this perspective too, set out in Table II.B.III.2,<sup>80</sup> those born in 1911 and 1921 prove to form far the largest group, with the older half of these (1911-15) clearly predominating.<sup>81</sup> At the same

<sup>78</sup> See Lepsius, 'Sozialstruktur'; id., 'Soziologische Theoreme'; *Soziologie des Lebenslaufs*; Peukert, *Weimarer Republik*; Herbert, 'Zur Entwicklung der Ruhrarbeiterschaft'.

<sup>79</sup> See for instance *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1046.

<sup>80</sup> In Tables II.B.III.2, II.B.III.3, and II.B.III.4 the values for the years 1940-44 are seen as the mean of the quarterly averages. The figure shown for 1939 is that for the fourth quarter, for 1945 that for the first quarter.

<sup>81</sup> In the last quarter of 1939 the 1911-15 group accounted for 65 per cent, and in the first quarter of 1940 55 per cent. In 1945 those born in 1913 and 1914 alone still made up 29.5 per cent of the division's strength; at the time the 253rd ID was formed the figure had been 40 per cent.

TABLE II.B.III.2. *Age structure of NCOs and other ranks, 1939–1945*  
(as per cent)

Year group	4/1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1/1945
1897–1900	4.9	3.8	2.7	2.1	1.3	0.6	0.8
1901–5	4.5	3.4	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.9
1906–10	15.3	15.7	14.7	15.5	16.0	16.4	15.4
1911–15	60.2	53.5	46.5	44.7	42.1	40.9	42.9
1916–20	14.9	23.0	30.8	28.7	27.5	27.2	29.7
1921–26	0.2	0.6	2.2	6.2	10.0	11.4	7.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	861	1,233	1,693	1,581	1,263	574	259

time the proportion of soldiers born between 1906 and 1910 varied by 15 per cent, while that of those born 1916–20 almost doubled. The 1897–1905 group, on the other hand, shrank appreciably by the end of the war. The youngest age group's share rises from an initially minimal level to a maximum averaging 11.4 per cent in 1944. At every point in time, therefore, the 253rd ID's age pyramid was determined by troops born between 1910 and 1920, and especially those between 1911 and 1915.<sup>82</sup> The majority of the soldiers had thus lived through important phases of their socialization during the closing phase of the Weimar Republic and the early years of the Third Reich.<sup>83</sup>

A further refining of the age structure poses the matter of the specific composition of the differing types of unit. Taken as examples are troops belonging to infantry units and supply units; we look on the one hand at the section of the combat units that experienced the most dynamic pattern of fluctuation in its personnel, and on the other at the units supporting them, since there a more stable pattern can be assumed. Basically, it may be expected that the younger age groups are concentrated in the combat units while the older ones predominate in the back-up units, since the organizational measures taken by the Wehrmacht to raise the efficiency of its field units encouraged such a distribution.<sup>84</sup>

For infantry units, Table II.B.III.3. confirms that at the same time as there was a sharp rise in the proportion of younger age groups the troops born between 1910 and 1915 played a central role. On the other hand the age groups from before 1905 disappeared entirely from the infantry units as the war went on while (as they did in the general age profile) the group of soldiers born

<sup>82</sup> Those born in these years formed the numerically largest group in the entire Wehrmacht, see Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 222. They were also the largest group in the total population of Germany, see Marschalck, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Deutschlands*, 187.

<sup>83</sup> See Merkl, *Political Violence*, 231–2.

<sup>84</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, Personnel and Administration (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 75–6; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1023–6.

TABLE II.B.III.3. *Age structure of infantry formations, 1939–1945 (as per cent)*

Year group	4/1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1/1945
1897–1900	1.1	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	—
1901–05	4.6	3.2	1.6	1.4	1.4	—	—
1906–10	16.6	17.4	15.6	17.2	17.9	18.7	14.3
1911–15	65.1	53.0	46.2	44.4	44.0	34.6	33.3
1916–20	12.6	24.9	34.5	29.9	26.4	33.7	47.6
1921–26	—	0.6	1.7	6.9	10.0	12.6	4.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	373	531	703	452	358	104	42

between 1906 and 1910 showed the least change. Thus, those born after 1910 dominated the combat units. The 1916–20 age groups, after forming a below-average proportion in 1939, accounted for almost half of the infantrymen by 1945. A contrary progression is seen in Table II.B.III.4. Right from the time of their formation the age pyramid centred on the age groups from before 1916, though here too those between 1911 and 1915 take a leading position—among the supply troops, too, they formed the largest single group in almost every quarter. In contrast to the infantry units, the age groups before 1910 however made up at least half the total numbers at all times. The youngest age group on the other hand had scarcely any significance among the supply troops, and the proportion of even those from 1916 to 1920 rose slightly only in the last year of the war.

The age pyramid in all branches of the division was dominated by those born between 1911 and 1915. Although their share of the total fell by almost a fifth between 1939 and 1945, they were the most numerous group in both the supply and infantry units at virtually all times. At the same time the distribution of older and younger cohorts, in terms of the units they belonged to, was very uneven. The pre-1910 groups grew increasingly dominant in the supply units, while the proportion of younger ones fell off sharply. Those born after 1916, in contrast, were clustered in the infantry units, where the older age groups' share continually shrank. In both of these branches and throughout the whole of the war, therefore, soldiers born between 1911 and 1915 formed the main pillar of the 253rd ID, and as a result dominate its social profile.<sup>85</sup> Their importance for the stability of the social structure is also emphasized by the fact that some 79 per cent of the soldiers from this age group were taken into the 253rd ID in the years 1939 and 1940. In spite of the casualties suffered by this age group up to 1945, around 30 per cent of the troops born 1911–15 who had been recruited to the division at the start of the war could still be found there in the last months of the war. They made up half of all the soldiers

<sup>85</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1043–4; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 235–6; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, ii, No. 1, 1–2.

TABLE II.B.III.4. *Age structure of supply troops, 1939-1945*

Year-group	4/1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1/1945
1897-1900	29.7	22.3	16.2	11.3	6.7	6.7	10.0
1901-05	21.6	14.5	15.5	16.8	24.7	20.0	10.0
1906-10	8.1	12.0	17.7	28.0	25.5	27.3	30.0
1911-15	35.1	40.5	36.0	32.5	35.7	24.0	30.0
1916-20	5.4	10.7	14.6	11.1	7.4	20.0	20.0
1921-26	—	—	—	0.3	—	2.1	—
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	37	48	81	65	47	18	10

who had joined the division in 1939/40 and were still in its units when the war ended. Two functions, especially, of this age group become evident: first, there was always a substantial element present that by belonging to the same generation shared similar experiences and showed a similar character from both the pre-war and war years. And secondly they provided a direct continuity within their units, since most of them had come to the 253rd ID very early on and around a third of them were still with it at the end of the war. There was thus among the division's lower ranks a considerable number of men who had gone through the entire war with it.

The dominance of certain age groups that has been found in the age structure allows conclusions as to the trend of the average age of the other ranks, which during the war rose from 26.7 to 29.8 years. This was primarily a consequence neither of the military casualties and the constant supply of relatively young replacement troops, nor of the calling-up of older age groups from the end of 1942.<sup>86</sup> In fact the change in the average age has less to do with an influx of older or younger soldiers than with the process of ageing among the biggest age group. In the age profile of the quarter-year samples the proportion of troops younger than 30 dropped from 86.2 per cent in 1939 to 48.3 per cent in 1945. At the same time the number of other ranks aged over 30 rose from 13.8 to 51.7 per cent, such that in the last year of the war the two groups were almost level. The age groups at the extremes, those over 40 and under 20, play a minor role compared to the large segment in the middle, while the age groups that were already dominant at the start of the war represented the majority over the whole period under study.

*(b) Regional Origin*

An analysis of the geographical origins of the soldiers can show to what extent the practice generally followed in the Wehrmacht of as far as possible forming individual units from men from a single region, in order to promote the cohesion

<sup>86</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 900-1.

of the resulting social groups, is reflected in reality.<sup>87</sup> In the case of the 253rd ID one sees, at military district level and with a proportion of 88.6 per cent, a clear preponderance of soldiers with homes in military district VI, that is to say mainly in the province of Westphalia and the north-western part of the Rhineland.<sup>88</sup> This formed the core recruiting catchment area for the division, and men coming from other parts of Germany made up only 11.4 per cent of its NCOs and other ranks.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly a clear and regionally homogeneous composition of the 253rd ID's personnel, remaining stable over time, can therefore be taken as a given. Linking the army's formations to a certain recruiting catchment area, and the specific fellow-countryman stamp that this put on a military unit, worked in both the institutional and individual context.

For the soldiers themselves the name by which the division was commonly known—the 'Rhine-and-Westphalians' Infantry Division—reflected their own origins and highlighted the close tie to their home area as a basis for recruitment. At the same time it made it easier for them to identify with their division.<sup>90</sup> The strength and intensity of the tie this created among the soldiers who shared a common regional background was the normal state of affairs for the majority of them,<sup>91</sup> but it was also very clearly and consciously felt by those who did not hail from the division's home area and who were at first outsiders. The reality of such mechanisms—the exclusion of those from outside the group, and group solidarity—is exemplified by the words of a soldier in the 253rd Artillery Regiment who himself came from East Prussia, outside the division's recruiting ground. Posted after basic training to the 253rd ID, he noted: 'We ended up in a Rhineland unit. Among these two hundred blokes there were nine or ten of us from up there in West Prussia. You can imagine how out of place we were there among the Rhinelanders.'<sup>92</sup> Some time later he was already feeling part of his new unit when his comrades refused to share requisitioned food with an unpopular battery officer, and commented: 'The Rhinelanders all stuck together when it was a matter of this.'<sup>93</sup>

During the war the Wehrmacht made use of this local character of units at various levels to motivate the troops. Frequently regional references were linked with commendations from inside or outside the division, for instance in a Wehrmacht report or in verbal or written appeals by the division's commander. At the end of winter battles in 1941/2 Lt.-Gen. Otto Schellert, commander of the 253rd ID, picking up a mention of the division in the Wehrmacht report for 27 March 1942, told his soldiers: 'Besides the Wehrmacht, your friends and loved ones, Rhineland and Westphalia, indeed the whole German

<sup>87</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 64–5; Hedler, *Aufbau des Ersatzwesens*, 131–2.

<sup>88</sup> See *Ämter, Abkürzungen, Aktionen*, 76, 80. See also Chapter III. 6(c) of this section; covered more fully in Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 101–6.

<sup>89</sup> See *Ämter, Abkürzungen, Aktionen*, 86.

<sup>90</sup> See Bönninghausen, *Kampf und Ende*; id., 253. *Infanteriedivision*.

<sup>91</sup> See Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*, 193–4; Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 74–6.

<sup>92</sup> Schröder, *Max Landowski*, 28.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

people, look on you today with gratitude, pride, and admiration.<sup>94</sup> Recruiting personnel from a relatively narrowly limited area could however also prove to be a disadvantage. The 253rd ID, like many formations from military district VI, found itself in the first six months of 1943 facing the problem that because of the intensifying air war and heavy air raids on the centres of the Rhineland-Westphalia industrial region almost all its soldiers were worried for their family and friends; the result was a noticeable deterioration in their morale.<sup>95</sup> It was important however that as a result of the stable regional-origins structure of the division's personnel both those who had long belonged to it and the troops coming into it during the war as replacements were most probably meeting in a social environment the regionally marked character of which was not strange to them. This made it possible for social ties and relationships to develop on the basis of similar background and generational common ground. The Wehrmacht leaders were well aware of this and encouraged the regional homogeneity of the troops, just as they made use of it to boost the soldiers' performance and capacity for coping with hardships.

(c) *Social Background*

Alongside the region the troops came from, their social origins were an important factor in determining characteristic groupings, since they highlighted further dimensions of their background experience beyond those due to generation. Here we shall look—in religious affiliation, marital status, and social class—at three factors that allow us to say something about the troops' social origins.

The distribution of religious denominations shows among the division's personnel a slight preponderance of Catholics (slightly more than half) over Protestants (around 42 per cent), with no noticeable change occurring during the war; other denominations had only a very minor place. This ratio, unusual when seen against that in the population of the Reich, reflects the region from which the troops were recruited. In the religiously heterogeneous military district VI both mainly Catholic and predominantly Protestant areas could be found next to areas in which the two religions were evenly

<sup>94</sup> BA-MA RH/26 253 25, 27 Mar. 1942. On this subject see also Wehrmacht reports from OKH for 24 Oct. 1943 and 10 Oct. 1944, quoted in Bönninghausen, 253. *Infanteriedivision*, 25, or that for 27 Mar. 1942, NARA, Film T-314, Film 681, Frame 319; BA-MA RH/26 253 22, telex from Army Group Centre, 1 Feb. 1942; BA-MA RH/26 253 25, report for 13 Mar. 1942; BA-MA RH/26 253 25, situation report for 15 Mar. 1942; BA-MA RH/26 253 25, interim report, 20 Mar. 1942; BA-MA RH/26 253 25, morning report, 21 Mar. 1942; BA-MA RH/26 253 21, extract from KTB, 16 Mar. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 55, 253. ID, 3 Mar. 1942; NARA, T-314, Film 682, Frame 012.

<sup>95</sup> BA-MA RH 26/253 42, situation report for 1 May 1943; BA-MA RH/26 253 42, situation report for 1 June 1943; likewise BA-MA RH/26 253 43, addendum to situation report for 28 June 1943; NARA, T-315, Film 1760, Frame 956–7; BA-ZNS, RH 26 253 468. Similarly NARA, T-314, Film 693, Frame 444, extract from activity report of the field post office for July 1943. See also Ralf Blank in the present volume.

<sup>96</sup> See Freeman, *Atlas of Nazi Germany*, 94; Bald, *Der deutsche Offizier*, 74; Wegner, *Waffen-SS*, 239–42.



balanced.<sup>96</sup> A marked level of religious life developed in the 253rd ID during the war.<sup>97</sup> Both of the division's chaplains made an effort to reach every one of its units (though with the exception of the Russian and Ukrainian auxiliary personnel) through religious services, sermons, and individual welfare. The padres were also at work in dressing stations, caring for the wounded, and with burials in the division's cemeteries. For the soldiers they provided an important safety-valve for coping with personal fears and problems, since by reason of their special position in the military hierarchy and the confidentiality they practised the army chaplains often enjoyed a greater measure of trust than the troops' direct military superiors. While they did deliberately separate their work from the Wehrmacht's official propaganda, the division's Protestant chaplain at least expressly acknowledged the need for providing both spiritual relief and ideological guidance; he laid stress on the positive effect that the work of the division's NSFO (Nazi political education officer) had.<sup>98</sup> The importance of spiritual welfare for the functioning of the military system can be seen not least from the fact that the demand for pastoral care, evident in attendance at religious services and individual requests, ran in step with the intensity of combat action and thus with the strain the troops were undergoing. The padres acted, as it were, to provide a spiritual stabilizing influence for soldiers exposed to stress from extreme combat situations, and helped them cope with what they were experiencing and doing.

The distribution of soldiers by marital status shows a clear preponderance of the unmarried. At the time of their pre-induction medical examination or up to the beginning of the war, 28.9 per cent were married and 67.8 per cent still single.<sup>99</sup> A further 177 got married during the war, reducing the proportion of unmarried to around 60 per cent. Prior to 1939 the distribution of married and single across the age groups shows the clear connection between age and marital status: while among those born before 1910 only a fifth of the soldiers were unmarried, the proportion already rose to around 69 per cent for the 1910–19 group, and was nearly 100 per cent for the youngest group. Marriages during the war were spread across the generations in accordance with age and the proportion of bachelors: only 4.5 per cent of the wartime bridegrooms were born before 1910, 89.9 per cent were in the middle segment, and 5.6 per cent in 1920 and 1921. There thus emerges a very clear picture of the soldiers' marital status, which was altered only marginally by wartime marriage. The older age groups had already started families when the war began and some already had to provide

<sup>97</sup> On what follows see the activity report of the division's Protestant chaplain for 1 July to 30 Sept. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 72; that of the Protestant chaplain for 1 Oct. to 31 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 72; of the RC chaplain for 1 July to 30 Sept. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 72; and of the RC chaplain for 1 Oct. to 31 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 72. See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, v. 514–15; Missala, *Für Gott, Führer und Vaterland*; Beese, *Seelsorger*; Güssen, 'Die Bedeutung der Katholischen Militärseelsorge'; Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 276–7, 292–3.

<sup>98</sup> Activity report of the Protestant chaplain for 1 Oct. to 31 Dec. 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 72.

<sup>99</sup> For 3.3 per cent of the soldiers there is no information on marital status available.

for children, while the number of those with family responsibilities decreased in line with age. The age group classes that formed the bulk of the 253rd ID's troops thus had the smallest proportion of fathers of families and married men. In the interval between the 1910 and 1914 groups a normal pre-war biography, which for most of the older soldiers had included marriage and starting a family, gradually petered out. This process was triggered first by the Nazi mobilization system taking hold from 1935; this took especially the age groups after 1913 into the Wehrmacht and RAD, and thus prevented their getting married for a certain time. The effect of this was heightened by the outbreak of war. The delayed founding of a family became a typical characteristic of the younger soldiers, not least matching Nazi militarism's ideas of the ideal warrior. It meant that the youngest, most effective troops, who moreover were deployed in what tended to be the units exposed to the greatest danger, only seldom had links with a family of their own. Holding back when in action through worry for one's wife and children—as well as a moralizing influence on behaviour against the civilian population in the area of operations through thoughts of one's own wife or children—can therefore have played only a minor role with the younger men in a combat unit.

The distribution of occupations among the soldiers by occupational category is shown in Table II.B.III.5.<sup>100</sup> At 65 per cent those in industry and the crafts were clearly in the majority, and among them the larger part, 77.2 per cent, were already skilled workers.<sup>101</sup> Those working on the land, on the other hand, played only a minor role at 12.8 per cent. Likewise the middle-class professions and those in government service as officials or otherwise account for only 19.2 per cent. The high proportion of workers and low number of those in rural occupations compared to the general population structure is in line with the population structure of the division's recruiting catchment area, where one of the Reich's most important industrial centres between the Rhine and Ruhr was providing the bulk of the personnel.<sup>102</sup> The share taken by the middle-class professions and civil service is however far below the German average.<sup>103</sup> Relating these figures on occupational background to social class, we see that 24.83 per cent of the soldiers may be categorized as lower-middle class, and 74.11 per cent as working-class.<sup>104</sup> Compared to the overall population of the Reich, the NCOs and other ranks of the 253rd ID included a higher than average proportion of the bottom social class, which at around 25 per cent was over-represented.<sup>105</sup>

A closer assessment of the soldiers' social background can be made using the occupation followed by their fathers, which can provide a clue to social mobility experienced among the troops, from the fathers' generation to that

<sup>100</sup> See Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 241; Geiger, *Soziale Schichtung*, 24–5; Jamin, *Zwischen den Klassen*, 107–8; Birn, *Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer*, 354–5; Genuneit, 'Methodische Probleme', 36–40.

<sup>101</sup> School education to a large extent matches this profile, and is not considered at length, see Rass, '"Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 115–16.

<sup>102</sup> See Freeman, *Atlas of Nazi Germany*, 114–15.

<sup>103</sup> See Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 241.

<sup>104</sup> Taking into account lines 1–8 and 10 of Table II.B.III.5.

<sup>105</sup> See Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 18.

TABLE II.B.III.5. *Occupation of soldiers and their fathers.*

Occupational class	Sons		Fathers	
	Number	per cent	Number	per cent
Salaried official/middle-class profession	366	15.98	255	11.13
Civil servant/Local government officer	74	3.23	142	6.20
Skilled worker (craftsman)	652	28.46	421	18.38
Skilled worker (industry)	352	15.36	526	22.96
Unskilled worker	488	21.30	371	16.19
Farmer	88	3.84	248	10.82
Farm worker	206	8.99	34	1.48
Invalid/pensioner	—	—	61	2.66
Unemployed	5	0.22	—	—
Student	41	1.79	—	—
Clergy	5	0.22	6	0.26
NS organization (full-time)	4	0.17	2	0.09
Unknown	10	0.44	225	9.82
Total	2,291	100.00	2,291	100.00

of their sons. Relating the fathers' occupations to the occupational groups shows a similar relationship between government servants and those in middle-class professions, the industrial workers, and those working on the land.<sup>106</sup> From this we find, similar to the analysis of the sons' occupations, 28 per cent belonging to the lower-middle class and 59 per cent to the working class.<sup>107</sup> Within the occupational groups a series of shifts is however noticeable. The proportion of government officials and employees, for instance, dropped by around a half from the fathers' generation to the next. Among the industrial workers, aside from the shift of emphasis from skilled industrial workers in the fathers' generation to skilled craftsmen in the sons', an increase can be noted in the number of unskilled workers among the sons. On the land, finally, there was a drastic change from self-employed farmers to farm workers employed by others. The specific features of the occupational spectrum of the two generations reflect, quite apart from the social shift in German society between the wars, the effect of three factors: first of all, the inter-generational continuity of occupation within the family was very often broken by the world economic crisis at the end of the 1920s. Secondly, the younger among the soldiers were still at the threshold of their working life; and thirdly, in certain areas such as the crafts and agriculture the internal handover between the generations had not yet taken place.

<sup>106</sup> As percentages: civil servants and middle-class professions 17.33 per cent, industrial workers 57.53 per cent, agricultural 12.83 per cent; others 12.83 per cent. Changes are probably ascribable mainly to the fact that the just on 10 per cent of cases where the father's occupation is unknown have to do for the most part with men who died in the First World War, for whom no occupation was stated.

<sup>107</sup> Taking into account lines 1–8 of Table II.B.III.5.

Leading on from this is the question of which occupational groups were affected by these changes in number, and for whom these meant an improvement or worsening in social status. In terms of social mobility the workers in the crafts and industry showed, with 84 per cent of workers' sons remaining in the same occupational group as their fathers, the greatest degree of stability.<sup>108</sup> Against this, 15.6 per cent of workers' sons rose up the social ladder into occupations that are here categorized as middle-class. Among those in agriculture there was a drift by the sons of farmers into industrial occupations, while those of farm labourers showed the lowest social mobility and the least rise in status of all our occupational groups. Soldiers with fathers in middle-class occupations were on the other hand able to retain this status in only about 52.7 per cent of cases, with 48.3 per cent taking up lower-class jobs.<sup>109</sup>

These tendencies to mobility in social stratification among the division's personnel were a development entirely typical of Germany as a whole, and of the Rhineland-Westphalia industrial region at the centre of our study in particular: a stable lower level dominated by workers in industry, in which can be seen a downwards social trend with only slight upwards mobility across class borders. Alongside this is a comparatively narrow lower-middle band within which a clear downward mobility is apparent.<sup>110</sup> This analysis of social strata shows up a series of characteristics that helped create socio-cultural homogeneity among the division's personnel: clear generational foci in the age pyramid, a stable regional provenance, a denominational profile with no minorities, and a social background characterized by broad groups.

#### (d) *National Socialism and Socialization*

National Socialism attached great importance to certain socializing bodies for the education and indoctrination of the male population—both with an eye to the training of future conscripts and regular troops, and in connection with the creation of the *Volksgenossen*, or 'national comrades'. Using the data gleaned from the troops' records it is possible to trace the influence of the NSDAP and its divisions, the Reich labour service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*, RAD), and the Wehrmacht itself in various segments of the division's personnel (see Table II.B.III.6).

In the random sample, 785 soldiers (i.e. 34.26 per cent) were members of one or more National Socialist organizations.<sup>111</sup> Over the course of time this

<sup>108</sup> Yet we may note internal fluctuations, for example an increase in the number of workers without qualifications, though it is possible to attribute this to the young generation's still uncompleted occupational development. When the skilled workers are separated from those without qualifications, the qualified ones show 50 per cent remaining stable, a quarter improving their status, and the other quarter worsening it. Among the unskilled, 50 per cent again kept the same status, while the other half improved it.

<sup>109</sup> See Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 56–87.

<sup>110</sup> See Prinz, *Vom neuen Mittelstand*, ch. 3 and 4; Recker, *Nationalsozialistische Sozialpolitik*, 300; Mason, *Social Policy*, 287.

<sup>111</sup> See Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 49–50. The figure more or less matches the figure found by Bartov for officers. As one person could have belonged to more than one organization, a distinction has to be made between memberships and members.

TABLE II.B.III.6. *Membership of NS organizations.*

Organization	Percentage membership	Percentages in division personnel
Hitler Youth	49.3	18.9
SA	36.3	13.7
Others	5.3	2.1
SS	4.9	1.9
NSDAP	3.7	1.4
Unknown	0.5	0.2
<i>n</i>	881 memberships	785 members

percentage rose from an average of 29 per cent in 1939/40 to almost 35 per cent at the end of the war. Among the memberships the most common, at 85.6 per cent, were clearly that of the SA and Hitler Youth. This can be explained mainly by the age and social-class structure of the sample, where the age and social groups from which, for instance, a large part of NSDAP members were recruited were in a minority.<sup>112</sup> Moreover the high number of working class in the sample tells us there would be a preponderance of the mass-membership organizations, the Hitler Youth and SA, over exclusive organizations such as the SS. In terms of social stratum, the percentage of soldiers belonging to the NS organizations points to a marked difference between the middle and lower class. While 46.15 per cent of those in the urban middle class were members of NS organizations, only 32 per cent of the latter were working-class. This bears out what the research has already found—the disproportionately high (seen against the overall German population structure) membership of many Nazi organizations among the middle classes.<sup>113</sup> The distribution of age groups over the main National Socialist organizations also reveals foci; for those born before 1910 it was, besides the SA, the NSDAP and SS that were important organizations, while among those born between 1910 and 1915 the Hitler Youth and SA began to dominate. For soldiers born after 1916, finally, the Hitler Youth was the prime institution. At the same time, these three age groups showed very different percentages of such membership. While this was only 11.6 per cent for those born before 1910, the 1910–15 group had 38.6 per cent belonging to Nazi organizations, and the youngest post-1916 group had 62 per cent who were members. This led to the Nazi-socialized element in the social profile being determined quite clearly by the younger troops, moulded mainly in the SA and Hitler Youth. This had all the more consequence as the Nazi organizations' grip on the birth-year cohorts in these age groups rose; up to 1916 it covered

<sup>112</sup> See Kater, *The Nazi Party*, 139–40, 280.

<sup>113</sup> See for example Longerich, *Die braunen Bataillone*, 84ff.; Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, 288–9; also Jamin, *Zwischen den Klassen*; Kater, *The Nazi Party*; Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*; Merkl, *Political Violence*.

around 30 per cent, but thereafter began very quickly to expand, already passing 50 per cent with the 1919 cohort (due mainly to a high level of HJ membership) and reaching close on 90 per cent for those born in 1924 and 1925.

The Reich labour service had, in the Nazi system, a twofold function. It was a tool of labour-market policy, but at the same time was also one of the regime's educational bodies.<sup>114</sup> In the first aspect it differed from the organizations discussed earlier, since after a first phase during which the RAD acted, against the background of the work-creation programme that had already existed under the Weimar Republic, as an alternative way of entering the labour market, the period of service with the RAD became compulsory; from 1935 onwards, 18-year-olds were conscripted to do a six-month stint in the RAD just as they were into military service. As a 'new kind of school for German youth'<sup>115</sup> it helped to influence them towards National Socialist thinking.<sup>116</sup> In our sample, 20.82 per cent of the soldiers had belonged to the RAD. The relationship between its two functions—creating work and educating—is clearly shown by the fact that only slightly more than 2 per cent of the memberships were prior to 1935 (when creating jobs was the main concern), while the records show 68 per cent for the period from 1935 to 1939 and another 28 per cent after 1939. A clear majority of memberships thus fall in a period that was marked more by competition between industry, the Wehrmacht, and the National Socialist organizations for dwindling manpower than by mass unemployment that needed to be tackled through work-creation schemes.<sup>117</sup> The distribution of the numbers of soldiers who had been in the RAD across the call-up and birth-year groups follows two trends. On the one hand we see a clear rise in memberships after 1935, which continued until 1939 and then—because of the war—began to fall off sharply.<sup>118</sup> A substantial number of the division's later personnel reached the age for starting their RAD service precisely at the point at which this organization could show its greatest coverage. This was at the same time also the period during which the prescribed length of service in it, six months, was in fact completed by most RAD privates, with the lengths of time served during the war by those in our sample tending (because of an early transfer to the Wehrmacht) to shorten.<sup>119</sup> The peak phase of conscription between 1935 and 1939 took in those born 1915 to 1920; some two-thirds of those in the RAD came within this field, defined by time span and age

<sup>114</sup> See *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 664. Unlike the organizations mentioned so far, the RAD was not a division of the NSDAP, but came under the Reich ministry of the interior.

<sup>115</sup> *Das Werk des Reichsarbeitsdienstes*, 7.

<sup>116</sup> See Zapke, 'Wehrmacht und Reichsarbeitsdienst', 30–1; Schneider, *Unterm Hakenkreuz*, 392–3; Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*, 198f.; Seifert, *Kulturarbeit*, esp. chs. 4, 5.1, and 7; Benz, 'Vom freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst', 344 f.

<sup>117</sup> See Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, 92–3; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 852–3.

<sup>118</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iv, 98–9.  
<sup>119</sup> Analysis of 411 out of 477 cases in which the period of service from conscription into and discharge from the RAD could be calculated shows the average length of service for the years 1815 to 1939 to be between five and seven months, while during the war this fell to four to five months.



range. For those born 1916–19 in particular, where the numbers enlisted, seen against their representation in the division's personnel, reached between 50 and 90 per cent, their service in the RAD became a major element in their socialization. Taking into account those soldiers who went through service in the RAD without at the same time, previously, or later having been members of other National Socialist organizations, the proportion of troops for whom, before entering the Wehrmacht, specifically National Socialist institutions had been a part of their socialization comes to 44.75 per cent.

Another organization for education with a hold on the 253rd ID's later rankers was the Wehrmacht itself. When it was raised and general conscription for military service was introduced the army became one of the Third Reich's main institutions for teaching the young.<sup>120</sup> Of all the soldiers included in the sample, 868 in all had been in the Reichswehr or Wehrmacht between 1918 and 1939. In addition to these there were a small number of veterans who had served in the First World War. As conscripts or long-service volunteers, 825 had joined the Wehrmacht between 1935 and 1939. Some of them had already been discharged again before the war and recalled when it began, while others had still been in uniform.<sup>121</sup> Overall, 93 per cent of those serving in the Wehrmacht between 1935 and 1939 had been born between 1910 and 1920, with the bulk of the conscripts coming from the years 1913–17. This was in line with the Wehrmacht's call-up plan, which registered the age groups from 1914 for a two-year military service and called up those before 1913 for a short course of training. By the time the war broke out the call-ups had reached those up to 1917.<sup>122</sup> Of the total sample, the upbringing of 36 per cent had been influenced by the Wehrmacht between 1935 and 1939; for the 1910–20 age group the figure already reaches 44.6 per cent, rising finally to 83 per cent from the 1913–17 group serving in the forces. This makes clear the place occupied in the biographies of this generation by experience in the military and the war, which is repeatedly commented on by those alive at the time. For soldiers born between 1915 and 1919, especially, their experience of civilian life—even that under the special conditions of life in the Third Reich—was limited to a short span of years in the mid-1930s. After that, there was for most men military service followed after a short break (often of only a few months) by service in the war, with after that perhaps years as a prisoner of war. Even more dramatic was the situation of the later age groups, whose civilian experience went no further than school, apprenticeship or training, and a brief spell working in a trade between the ages of 14 and 18, before military life, war service, and—for some—captivity as a POW filled their life for as many as fifteen years.

The mainstays of the educational system—school, the Party's divisions, the Reich labour service, and the Wehrmacht—were intended in Nazi Germany to

<sup>120</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 6, 48.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 43–4.

<sup>122</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 730–1; Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, iii. 8; *ibid.*, iv. 279–80.



be fashioned into an all-embracing network of institutions that enmeshed people very early and for ever, and one might say stayed with them for life.<sup>123</sup> The history of this system taking effect falls into two phases. When it was largely developed in the middle 1930s, it had first to take in the older age groups who, because of their age, would be able to complete only part of the path mapped out for the young. The younger groups ought to have been locked into the full sequence from an early age, but no longer passed through the whole of it when the war began to affect the way their life developed. At the same time the National Socialist rulers found themselves facing the problem of getting a firm hold on a great number of youths and young adults whom prior to seizing power they had been able to influence only very incompletely and unsatisfactorily.<sup>124</sup> Before a comprehensive system of education for coming generations could be put into effect, therefore, a first objective had to be to engage the largest possible part of the young population of all ages—especially the men—as future soldiers in, as a start, at least one of the systems and expose them to direct National Socialist influence.

When these various figures on how the educational institutions of the Third Reich affected the life of those who were subsequently soldiers in the 253rd ID are reviewed together against this background, some surprising facts emerge: for the age groups born after 1919 the divisions of the NSDAP claimed on average 59 per cent,<sup>125</sup> the Reich labour service took in before the war almost 69 per cent of those between 1916 and 1919; and finally, an average 83 per cent of those born 1913–17 did a period of military service before 1939. The Nazi state was in this way able already before the war, through the structure and sequence of its educational institutions, to spread its influence back to the age groups born after 1913. The groups prepared for war thus included not only the ‘Hitler Youth generation’, the cohorts from the 1920s, but those from almost a full decade earlier. For each year from 1913 onwards the overwhelming majority had passed through at least one part of the Nazi educational system. Altogether, the involvement of the soldiers in all three areas meant that of the core generation born between 1910 and 1920 close on 75 per cent had been in the RAD, military service, or one of the Party divisions.

The number of memberships per individual shows the system’s full extent: while 55.7 per cent of the soldiers had indeed passed through one of the three branches, 30 per cent of them were already in two, and 13.2 per cent had spent time in three or more. This can now be interpreted from two viewpoints: first, the German war planners were not reckoning on what turned out to be such a costly war against the Soviet Union nor on a war lasting almost six years, but one meant to go as it had up to mid-1941.<sup>126</sup> Seen from that aspect, the preparation of so many age groups for going to war that was achieved by 1939 has to

<sup>123</sup> See Schneider, *Unterm Hakenkreuz*, 406–7; *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 152–3.

<sup>124</sup> See Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, ch. 2; Stachura, ‘Das Dritte Reich und die Jugend-erziehung’, 228–9.

<sup>125</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, i. 152.

<sup>126</sup> See Kolko, *Century of War*, 182–3.

be rated all the more highly. Secondly, it was this generation that formed the human basis of the division that we are studying, and that in 1939 the regime took into war well prepared. Despite the high casualties, it placed a decisive stamp on the social profile of the division right through to the war's end, accumulating alongside its pre-war socialization the pooled experiences of war, from blitzkrieg to a war of annihilation.

## 5. FEATURES OF THE TROOPS' COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHIES

Seen from the soldiers' perspective, the observations, lines of development, and trends we have been looking at comprised a multiplicity of isolated events and experiences that made up the totality of their biographies. Though it is impossible to cover the whole width of this spectrum, it is possible from typical examples and phenomena to distil a kind of collective biography.<sup>127</sup>

### (a) *Mobilization and Training*

When he joined the field units of the his division, a soldier in the 253rd ID had already amassed basic experience of life in the Wehrmacht. Months earlier he had been sent his summons to register and undergo a medical examination, or his call-up papers. The medical examination had shown him to have an acceptable state of health, adequate sight and hearing, and not too many physical limitations. The new soldier also had to pass a series of tests—in reading, writing, and arithmetic—and sign a number of documents in which *inter alia* he not only certified his 'Aryan descent' but was informed of the suspension of his membership of divisions of the NSDAP during the time he belonged to the Wehrmacht.<sup>128</sup>

In the case of the 253rd ID this soldier had an average height of 1.70 metres and weighed 66 kg. The average height was, on the basis of the measurement made at the initial medical, around 170 cm across all those born between 1897 and 1926. In the age groups after 1920, however, we see a tendency towards ever shorter heights down to 150 cm, indicating that at the time of the registration and medical these young soldiers' physical development was not yet complete. Among soldiers in the older age groups the body weight was on average clearly greater than with the younger troops; it ranged from around 70 kg for soldiers born before the First World War, to between 55 and 60 kg for the younger ones. This too can be for the most part put down to the differing ages and stages of physical development,<sup>129</sup> and the body mass index calculated for these soldiers reflects this.<sup>130</sup> Some 9 per cent of them

<sup>127</sup> See Schröder, 'Alltagsleben im Rußlandkrieg', 389–90.

<sup>128</sup> See Filges, *Leitfaden*, pt. VI, Wehrstammbuch; *Heeres-Verwaltungstaschenbuch* 1935/6, 201.

<sup>129</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 894–5.

<sup>130</sup> The body mass index (BMI) shows the ratio of body weight to height (kg/m<sup>2</sup>). According to this a man of normal weight should not have a BMI above 25 or under 20. On the BMI see *A-Z Family Medical Encyclopedia*, 4th edn. (London, 2004), 113.

were underweight and 16.68 per cent overweight, though 74.23 per cent had a body weight classed as normal. The overweight were concentrated in those born in 1904 and before, and the normal weight mostly in the age groups from 1905 to 1921, whereas those born after 1922 tended to be underweight when attending for their medical. The proportion of soldiers with a physical capacity reduced in this way shrank during the war.<sup>131</sup> On the basis of weight and height, therefore, the majority of the 253rd ID's personnel and especially the numerically predominant age groups had a sound physical constitution at the pre-induction medical, while at the less-numerous extremes there were limitations due to age.

The next step for a soldier after registration and induction was basic military training. A mechanism that underlay all stages of military life started to come into play: a soldier belonged at all times to a particular military unit of the field army or replacement army. This resulted in an uninterrupted chain of postings from which can be traced the whole course of a life in the Wehrmacht, from training to departure through death, being captured, or being discharged.

The training of recruits was split into two different but consecutive periods. Initially, at the time the 253rd ID was raised in August 1939, there was neither a system for training replacement personnel that was effective and matched to the size of the Wehrmacht, nor an equal degree of military training among the troops. Instead, as was planned for units in the 4th wave, reservists, regular troops, briefly trained age groups, and totally untrained soldiers were brought together and over the first few months of the war moulded into an effective military organization.<sup>132</sup> By the start of the war in the west these soldiers went through an intensive training in their own field units; this meant that the composition of companies during training was the same as that when they went into action. The soldiers experienced training and combat in the same social environment, and it was their superiors and instructors during training who led them into battle. With only minor changes in the personnel make-up, and shared first experiences in the Wehrmacht and war, close social bonding developed during this phase not only between the soldiers but between them and their officers as well. It was with this background experience that all those in the 253rd ID took part in the campaign in the west from May 1940, served as occupation troops in France, and in June 1941 stood ready to invade the Soviet Union.

In the the second, slightly overlapping period that began around 1940 the replacement personnel were then trained mostly in the replacement army before being posted to the field units. Here again the paths followed could differ considerably. During training, those recruits who were being trained in the replacement units of the 253rd ID itself enjoyed the closest support from their subsequent field units. This was the case most of all with the infantry

<sup>131</sup> Personnel allocation plan 17–20 May 1943, BA-MA RH/26 253 67. See also Peltner, 'Soldatenernährung'; Kluge, 'Kriegs- und Mangelernährung'.

<sup>132</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1754, KTB of 253rd ID No. 1, 6 Sept.–29 Oct. 1939; NARA, T-315, Film 1754, KTB of 253rd ID No. 2, 9 Nov. 1939–29 Sept. 1940.

units, whose replacements came from the battalions in the 253rd infantry replacement regiment that were linked directly to them. The second category of soldiers were prepared for their future military duties in replacement units that, while they also supplied the 253rd ID, provided replacement personnel to a number of other units of the field army as well. This variant was found mostly with support, reconnaissance, or anti-tank units, the numbers of which within a division were not enough to warrant setting up function-specific replacement units assigned to single field units of that kind. Here, the soldiers were when their training came to an end divided up into small groups and posted to a variety of units. Their integration into the division began only once they had joined the field units.<sup>133</sup>

The duration of training varied depending on the time of joining the Wehrmacht and the branch in which a soldier was being trained. In the case of those who would later be using weapons systems or were earmarked for special tasks the training lasted, throughout the war, longer than for those belonging to purely infantry combat units; thus artillerymen, sappers, or men in an anti-tank unit spent longer in their training units than those in infantry regiments. The length of training for the latter settled down, after a three-month course at the start of the war, and via an attempt in early 1940 to cut this to only six weeks with the replacement army topped up once they were with the field army, at about two months.<sup>134</sup> Then came transfer to a field unit, which especially after 1942 meant first for many of the new soldiers a stay of several weeks in the division's field replacement battalion.<sup>135</sup> For soldiers being trained as, for instance, sappers or gunners the length of training mostly varied between three and four months before being posted to units in the field. Here too, especially in the second half of the war, training was completed in the field replacement battalion before combat action proper began.<sup>136</sup>

The mechanisms for transfers between the replacement and field armies also changed in the course of the war. While up to the middle of 1942, and in particular during the first phase of the war against the Soviet Union until the winter of 1941–2, troops were sent up to the field army in large transfer battalions of several hundred recruits, later on a procedure developed that was designed to allow the soldiers to integrate better with their future units.<sup>137</sup> After 1942, in the 253rd ID, trained recruits and convalescent wounded were first placed together in the 'on standby' companies of the replacement battalions. Out of this pool, when it had reached sufficiently large numbers, the transfer

<sup>133</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, pt. III.

<sup>134</sup> Consultation with field divisions on 12 Mar. 1940, BA-MA RH/26 156 TU 0184/8.

<sup>135</sup> BA-ZNS, WStB Alfred L., ID 932107715; BA-ZNS, WStB Theodor W., ID 1261429055.

<sup>136</sup> BA-ZNS, WStB Heinrich S., ID-1645869372; BA-ZNS, WStB Hermann S., ID 963518625. See Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 72–3. In 1938 basic training in the infantry lasted a total of 16 weeks, in 1940 8 weeks were added, and in 1944 training took 12 to 14 weeks, see Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, §§ 15–18.

<sup>137</sup> See Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 75–6.

companies and convalescent transfer companies were formed and recruits and convalescents sent up together to the field units at regular short intervals. There, if the military situation allowed, this was not followed immediately by posting to units fighting in the front line, but by an acclimatization period under the conditions of the operational area in the eastern theatre. New soldiers attended courses, underwent training in the field replacement battalion or the division's combat school, and served in rear-area units. In this way they were able to build up experience before taking part in front-line action, while becoming step by step integrated into the division so that they could become a part of the small social groups within the companies.<sup>138</sup> If this process was disrupted in critical battle situations the replacement troops—often deployed in groups consisting entirely of replacements—not infrequently suffered high casualties that could lead to these units collapsing.<sup>139</sup>

(b) *Time at Duty Station*

Essential for assessing what life was like for those in the other ranks is, besides the sequence of spells with the various duty stations, how long they spent in each of these.<sup>140</sup> At the highest level of the military hierarchy considered here the question arises of what periods of membership result for the soldiers from the dates of posting to the division and departure from it, and whether there are differences in duration depending on the date of joining.

Analysis of all cases where the dates of arrival and departure and nature of departure are known yields, without differentiating time-wise, an average time spent by NCOs and other ranks with units of the 253rd ID of 38.2 months. The pattern followed by these periods is—as might be expected—characterized by a longer than average length of time for soldiers who joined the division early on, and very much shorter lengths of time for those posted to it relatively late in the war. The average duration for the first-quarter sample from the year 1942 already dropped to around 33 months, and by the first quarter of 1944 had fallen again to only 19 months. This is due not least to the fact that soldiers who were posted to the division later could achieve a lower maximum duration of membership since the time left until the end of the war was shorter than for those who had already been serving with the division for longer.<sup>141</sup> To balance out this distortion use can be made of the ratio of the actual duration of a soldier's belonging to the 253rd ID to the maximum achievable length of service with it between his date of entry and the end of the war. Seen from this viewpoint, we find that for the majority of

<sup>138</sup> See for example Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 93–4, 98–9.

<sup>139</sup> See Chapter III. 3 and 5(f) of this section.  
<sup>140</sup> By this is meant how long a soldier belonged to a unit in the division, not length of survival in the military-casualties sense. It has also to be borne in mind that soldiers who were transferred out of the 253rd ID might quite well be later among the killed or missing. A distinction is therefore made between the nature of the departure from the division and a man's ultimate fate. A relevant analysis can be found in Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 250–1.

<sup>141</sup> For soldiers belonging to the division's various units from August 1939 through to May 1945 the maximum possible length of service in the 253rd ID community was 69 months.

soldiers—48 per cent with 32.7 per cent of cases unknown—the length of service was, measured against the maximum possible from their first joining the division to the war's end, over half of the maximum figure possible for them. Around a fifth of them even reached relative periods of between 80 and 100 per cent. The age groups born between 1910 and 1920, heavily represented and on average with long service with the division, tended to be in the top third of the scale, while the youngest age groups centred around the 50 per cent mark.

Long to middling lengths of service with the 253rd ID were thus more typical than short ones. This is in line—if we distribute the absolute number of membership periods across the birth-year groups—with the preponderance of medium to long times spent in the division by soldiers born before 1920, and the invariable fall-off in this length of time among those born after 1920. The average longer length of membership of the age groups dominating the social profile at the start of the war thus contributed on the one hand to slowing down the rate of social change, and on the other to the great importance the social composition of the division at the time it was raised had for the way its social profile developed subsequently.

The change in the personnel can be more closely assessed by looking at the times soldiers spent in the field army and replacement army and in individual units at company level. Both a survey of all the documented times at the various duty stations and an analysis of the periods of service with the 253rd ID show that the NCOs and other ranks passed around 70 per cent of their service with the field army, some 12.5 per cent each in replacement or convalescent units, and a further 5 per cent in transfer units, i.e. in transit between the replacement and field armies. The average time spent in a unit of the 253rd ID was 493 days with a field unit, 94 days in the replacement army, 128 days in a convalescent unit, and 41 days in a transfer unit.

Two aspects of this finding are of particular significance. With it accounting for 70 per cent of their length of service, the time during which they were available for action was relatively high. On top of that, the average time spent with the field army was far more than a year. In units operating in various areas it could of course differ markedly from this average figure; thus in an infantry company the average was 338 days, while that with a battery in the artillery regiment was 606 days. In the supply units, which were reorganized several times, the average length was 366 days, while with the division's evidently very stable signals section it was even 896 days. The division community as a whole, therefore, was made up of parts within which the degree of social change varied widely.

### *(c) Number of Duty Stations*

Directly connected to the time spent with individual duty stations is the number of postings a soldier may have had over the whole of his war service. Among the troops in the 253rd ID we find a wide spread here, ranging from soldiers who belonged to only one or two different units—which can point



to incomplete records, though it may also relate to men who were killed or declared missing shortly after being posted to a unit—to others who for certain reasons stayed for an unusually long time with a unit. Other biographies reveal a veritable odyssey, wandering between twenty or more duty stations. This can be the result of multiple woundings, or of attempts to find a soldier with special abilities, or perhaps physical limitations, a suitable billet. A survey across the whole time span under study and all documented postings shows a clear distribution of frequencies: between 40 and 45 per cent of soldiers had fewer than 5 duty stations, and another 40 per cent belonged to between 6 and 10 different units; 12–15 per cent were with between 11 and 15, and only 3–5 per cent of the soldiers had been posted to more than 15.<sup>142</sup> The majority, at around 67.5 per cent, involved 3 to 9 postings, so for a soldier in the Wehrmacht a change of duty unit was an entirely commonplace event. It could mean being transferred from a training to a field unit or being moved within a battalion, regiment, or division, but it could also mean a soldier being moved to a unit entirely strange to him, or the transferring of a wounded man. In the latter case there could be a long chain of postings between admission to the military hospital and his rejoining his field unit. In accordance with a Wehrmacht service regulation wounded soldiers were, where they had not remained with their units, posted to the standby or convalescent company of their replacement unit six weeks after being wounded. They were allocated to this even if they were still in hospital or on convalescent leave.<sup>143</sup> Convalescence could be followed with a spell in a local territorial unit, for instance guarding prisoners of war or in a recruiting centre, where they were employed until fully recovered. Most began their return to the front by being posted to a replacement unit's standby company in which soldiers were assembled to make up transfer units; these were then combined with convalescent transfer units and sent up to the field units of their division.<sup>144</sup>

There were besides postings that entailed no serious changes in the soldiers' social surroundings, as they were either moves of entire companies when units were being consolidated or were within a battalion or regiment. The identity tag registers of the 253rd ID show, for instance, that between 1939 and 1945 just on 39 per cent of transfers in and 32.2 per cent of transfers out were within the regiment or division.<sup>145</sup> In the total sample, 74 per cent of the soldiers were moved within the 253rd ID more than once over the time they belonged

<sup>142</sup> These figures are obtained from the lengths of stay related to 16,730 postings for the 2,291 soldiers in the sample. Examining the whole sample, isolated cases of soldiers whose fate is known (that is to say discrete lists of postings), and calculating postings during the war, the figures are a close match.

<sup>143</sup> See Filges, *Leitfaden*, pt. XII, *Kriegsstammrolle*, 8.

<sup>144</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 889; Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, §§ 7 and 9.

<sup>145</sup> DDSt, identity tag register of 453 IR. 14.94 per cent of soldiers came from other units of the 253rd ID, 23.79 per cent were moved between companies of 453 IR. Against this 6.2 per cent were transferred out of 453 IR to units within the division, and 26 per cent to other units in 453 IR.



to it. So although transfers were frequent occurrences in a soldier's life, and an uninterrupted stay of a number of years with a particular unit was rather uncommon, being transferred did not necessarily mean a radical change in environment or leaving a familiar social structure for good.

(d) *Wounds and Illness*

Being wounded or falling ill were among the most common reasons for a soldier being separated from his social milieu. They were not only both a physical and mental trauma, but might also mean an interruption in service at the front and a major break in the soldier's career. The danger of being wounded or killed, or falling prey to disease or infection, constantly dogged all the troops on active service. Like other armies, the Wehrmacht countered this with a comprehensive medical system that on the one hand gave the soldiers the assurance of being cared for if they suffered physical injury, while on the other ensuring that those who had been wounded were available to be sent back into action as rapidly as possible.<sup>146</sup> As the war went on the Wehrmacht found itself obliged, especially in the eastern theatre of operations in view of the enormous number of wounded and the vast distances that had to be crossed in transporting and providing for them, to set up a complex medical care system to cope with the constant stream of wounded and ill soldiers from the area of operations. After being rescued they were channelled via dressing stations and field hospitals, from first aid to final cure and recovery, step by step towards their home areas; as a rule only those severely wounded passed along the whole chain and completed their convalescence in their home garrison, and the more lightly wounded started on the path back to the front from various points along the chain of medical care. While some soldiers succumbed to their injuries while still in hospital and others were discharged as a result of their wounds, most either returned to the field army or were where necessary given a posting that took account of their physical handicaps.<sup>147</sup>

For the men of the 253rd ID coming face to face with death and wounding became, over nearly six years of the division's being constantly in action, an almost everyday part of life. Being hit oneself, or losing friends and comrades through their being wounded, could suddenly change a soldier's personal world at any time.<sup>148</sup> During the war 1,261 of the 2,291 soldiers in the sample, i.e. 55 per cent, were wounded once or even several times or experienced illness, inflammations, or other health problems resulting in medical treatment. Between them, they suffered in all 2,231 episodes of injury or illness; taken over the length of time they belonged to the 253rd ID, we find

<sup>146</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, § 9; Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 97–9; Fischer, 'Die Notchirurgie', 47–76.

<sup>147</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 155–6. See also Chapter III. 3 of this section.

<sup>148</sup> See Dinter, *Hero or Coward*, 22–3.

some 1,105 soldiers and 1,853 occurrences of injury.<sup>149</sup> In both there is a very similar incidence pattern: around 57 per cent of those affected were wounded once, 23 per cent twice, 13 per cent three times, and only 7 per cent more than three times, with some 3 per cent suffering five or more wounds. For the great majority of those whose health was affected, therefore, the typical incidence was between one and three episodes.

Fighting on the eastern front exposed the troops to every kind of horror modern land war had to offer. Besides direct confrontation in hand-to-hand combat and at a distance, they were at risk from indirect fire by an unseen enemy in the form of bombs, mortar and artillery rounds, or mines.<sup>150</sup> So far as can be reconstructed from the data in the personnel records, indirect fire and the resulting injury from shell splinters were the most common cause of wounds among the soldiers of the 253rd ID. The 37 per cent of all woundings that these accounted for well exceeded the quarter of wounds resulting from direct shots. A further 7.5 per cent of wounds received in battle cannot be classified. In all, therefore, 69 per cent of recorded impairments to health were the direct outcome of enemy action during combat operations. Among the parts of the body affected, it was mainly the limbs and head that were hit by shell splinters, while the trunk came in only fourth place. Wounds caused by individual rounds, on the other hand, injured mostly large parts of the body such as the trunk and legs, while wounds to the arms and head were less frequent.<sup>151</sup> Another 23 per cent of cases treated involved illness and frostbite, with 19 per cent falling ill and getting infections, and some 4 per cent being frostbitten.<sup>152</sup>

Typhus, an infectious disease that from first infection to disappearance of the last symptoms could last more than six months, and could prove fatal, was transmitted by the lice that were ubiquitous on the eastern front; during the periodic epidemics it became a scourge for both the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and the civilian population.<sup>153</sup> For the soldiers the fear felt by both individuals and the Wehrmacht leadership of infection and its spreading had two main consequences. The fight against the spread of disease, at both personal and institutional level, became part of everyday military life. It included both the delousing ritual that was obligatory before any travel towards the home front in order to prevent typhus epidemics in the rear areas, and the collective delousing of entire units when these were being moved or relieved. Besides this were the

<sup>149</sup> This corresponds to a proportion of about 55 per cent of soldiers in the sample who in the course of their service suffered at least one wounding or illness necessitating medical treatment. The survival of the sick report books (also important in this context) in which Wehrmacht medical services recorded their activity—those that remain are today kept in the *Krankenbuchlager* in Berlin—has in the case of the 253rd ID not been complete enough, so the following comments are based mainly on the analysis of personnel records; see the present author's Chapter I, n. 29.

<sup>150</sup> On the effect of different types of weapon on the human body in the Second World War context, see *Feldchirurgie*, 11–28, and Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1-1784, 196.7.

<sup>151</sup> See Fischer, 'Die Notchirurgie', 57, 60–1.

<sup>152</sup> The remainder was made up of orthopaedic trauma, burns, and so on.

<sup>153</sup> See Juhnke, *Auswertung des Fleckfiebergeschehens*, 31–8; Leven, 'Fleckfieber beim deutschen Heer', 127–65; Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 206–7; on other conditions see Hause, *Untersuchungen zum Ruhrgeesehen*; Rödel, *Untersuchungen zum Typhusgeschehen*; in general, Weindling, *Epidemics*.

constant struggle by the troops to gain the upper hand over the lice on their own body, in which they had the support of their duty stations in a wide variety of ways. These included mass delousing campaigns, and specifically targeted propaganda that taught the soldiers what to do and at the same time placed the blame for the typhus plague on the civilian population, and the Jewish part of it in particular. A passage in the typhus leaflet—instructions giving rules of behaviour for avoiding infection that the soldier had to tuck inside his paybook—read: ‘a large part of the country’s population, but especially the Jews, are ridden with lice.’<sup>154</sup> In this way the soldiers were motivated to play their part in the second important area of disease control—the determined moves to prevent the spread of typhus among the civilian population and its being passed on to the troops. To this end the soldier became an agent in a brutal spectrum of measures aimed not at improving the lot of the civilian population but solely at protecting German soldiers at all costs. This ranged from keeping soldiers separate from the locals in their quarters, through forced quarantining of the ill, under threat of death, in ‘plague villages’, to targeted expulsion of civilians ill with typhus from German-ruled territory.<sup>155</sup> Delousing or treatment was considered for, at most, *Hilfs* or civilians whose cooperation the Wehrmacht needed when their illness might have meant removal from anywhere near German soldiers rather than treatment.<sup>156</sup> Disease and the fear of it thus became factors in the soldier’s everyday life that determined his behaviour and, combined with their being made a tool of propaganda, formed one component in the complex of motives behind the brutal treatment visited on the civilian population by both the Wehrmacht as an institution and the soldiers themselves.

Similar to disease in its effects was—at least in the initial phase of the war against the Soviet Union—the threat of frostbite during the winter months. In the case of the 253rd ID this took on massive proportions in the winter of 1941–2. Between 20 December 1941 and 19 February 1942 alone the division reported 1,429 men out of action because of frostbite, that is to say around 13 per cent of its average strength. Among these, however, 1,168 cases were first- or second-degree frostbite while only 261 severe, third-degree victims were recorded.<sup>157</sup> Particularly damaging at this time was the lack of winter equipment that was typical of the Wehrmacht in the east during that winter.<sup>158</sup> In the winters of 1942/3 and 1943/4, on the other hand, frostbite played

<sup>154</sup> Typhus leaflet, to be inserted in the pocket of the paybook, publ. by Heeres-Sanitätsinspektion 49 r 35 S Jn/Wi G (I) 1819/41, here as found in the paybook of Peter R.: BA-ZNS, WStB Peter R., ID 845046684. On anti-Semitic expressions in Wehrmacht orders see Wette, ‘Rassenfeind’, 175–201, 185–6. Also NARA, T-314, Film 990, Frame 238; NARA, T-314, Film 948, Frame 663, 786; NARA, T-314, Film 990, Frame 372. See Juhnke, *Auswertung des Fleckfiebergeschehen*, 9–10.

<sup>155</sup> Seuchenbekämpfung in der Zivilbevölkerung [Combating disease in the civilian population], 19 Oct. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 63.

<sup>156</sup> Annexes to KTB of quartermaster’s dept., 31 July 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 58.

<sup>157</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 681, Frame 89; see *Feldchirurgie*, 102–3.

<sup>158</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 678, Frames 1483–4; report on clothing acquired by the troops themselves, 17 Feb. 1942, BA-MA RH/24 23 68; report on equipment, 10 Feb. 1942, BA-MA TH/26 253 56; see also Schröder, *Max Landowski*, 46.

a minor role,<sup>159</sup> and it was only in that of 1944/5 that it again increased in the 253rd ID. Then, however, it affected mostly the new replacement personnel consisting of very young and very old soldiers who perhaps lacked the experience and equipment for getting through the winter unscathed.<sup>160</sup> It was indeed in the first winter of the war on the eastern front that there was a direct link between the danger of suffering frostbite and how the Wehrmacht and its soldiers treated the civilian population. In face of this threat any inhibitions in how one acquired warm clothing quickly fell away. This was done by institutionally organized means, or by individual initiative. Thus the civilian population in the 253rd Infantry Division's sector and that of its neighbouring divisions during the retreat in 1941/2, when the divisions left behind them a wide zone of devastation, were not only deprived of their housing and winter food stocks, but also systematically robbed of their winter clothing which was then shared out among the soldiers.<sup>161</sup> Subsequently, too, soldiers relieved Soviet civilians and prisoners of war of their often superior winter equipment, which could quite easily involve murdering the victims or tacitly accepting their later death from the cold.<sup>162</sup> A case of this kind from the winter of 1941/2 is described by a member of the 253rd Artillery Regiment: 'Once, in the winter, a deserter came across. He was . . . well dressed for the winter . . . then people started taking an interest in his things. One took his cap away from him, another pulled his boots off, a third wanted his coat. Then the lieutenant said that he had to be fetched back for interrogation. And the company commander, he sent the right man off with him. Soon after there was a bang, and he [the German] came back, and reported "order carried out". He'd shot him.'<sup>163</sup>

For those in the 253rd ID who were wounded or fell ill there immediately began, as described earlier, the passage through the Wehrmacht medical system. After first aid by their comrades or a medical orderly they were moved via a dressing station or field hospital to one of the large garrison hospitals maintained in eastern Europe by the Wehrmacht.<sup>164</sup> Soon after being wounded, often already during the first long stay in hospital, came the award of the wound badge. This decoration now marked its wearer out as a soldier with front-line and battle experience, won him social prestige, and set the

<sup>159</sup> In the sample, nearly 90 per cent of the cases of frostbite occurred in the winter of 1941/2; NARA, T-314, Film 685, Frame 1519; NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frame 261; NARA, T-315, Film 1760 Frame 114.

<sup>160</sup> DDSt, identity tag register of 464 IR, single report. Frostbite affected most of all replacement troops from the Cracow border guard; the same is found in DDSt, identity tag register of 473 IR for January 1945.

<sup>161</sup> Corps order No. 78 of 15 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 22; division order No. 189 of 16 Dec. 1941, BA-MA RH/26 253 22; KTB of 253 ID, entry for 16 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 21; corps administrator XXIII Army corps, 17 Feb. 1942, BA-MA RH 24 23 68.

<sup>162</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 681, Frame 255; NARA, T-314, Film 686, Frames 123-4.

<sup>163</sup> Schröder, *Max Landowski*, 54.

<sup>164</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 109-10.

seasoned combat veteran apart from the 'base wallah'. In the course of transport back, the hospital at Smolensk, Minsk, or Warsaw was a further way-station for the wounded before many of them were sent for final recovery to hospitals close to the home base of their replacement army units. At all stages along the way through the medical system the soldiers remained exposed to risks and imponderables. In particular there was always the danger of the wound becoming infected or of catching an infectious disease before the transports reached the big delousing centres.<sup>165</sup> But the transport itself, especially that by rail, placed the soldiers under a constant threat (just as applied to transport back to the front). An extreme case of this happened to 253rd ID on 24 February 1942, when a train carrying several hundred of the division's wounded from Nelidovo near Lake Volgo to the rear area during the German formations' headlong retreat fell into the hands of the Red Army. A large part of the wounded men were killed.<sup>166</sup> Later on, too, attacks and acts of sabotage by partisans or regular units of the Red Army on troop trains in the eastern theatre of operations remained a constant danger, of which the soldiers must have been aware.<sup>167</sup> And even in the supposedly safe garrison hospitals of the replacement army units—which in the case of the 253rd ID lay within range of the Allied aircraft—they could hardly think themselves safe, as a number of deaths in its replacement units during air raids on cities in military district VI shows.<sup>168</sup> Although the peaks of danger in a soldier's life gradually lessened as he moved further away from the front, the change of location from the area of operations to the home front meant less enjoying a break in the day-to-day experience of war than changing one theatre of operations for another.<sup>169</sup>

In the final stage of their recovery many soldiers, where they were not serving in their replacement units or undergoing training, were posted to a wide variety of duty stations to reinforce the personnel there. Convalescent wounded from the 253rd ID thus spent some time performing various tasks before they returned to the front, mostly guarding POW camps or railway stations, or on town patrols, or in administrative offices.<sup>170</sup> Veterans from the eastern front were also prized as training instructors; besides working in their own replacement units, some of them went to Hitler Youth military training camps where they helped prepare their future comrades for life on the

<sup>165</sup> See Juhnke, *Auswertung des Fleckfiebergeschehen*, 6–7; Fischer, 'Die Notchirurgie', 70–1.

<sup>166</sup> Report on winter battles, 10 Jan. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 56; DDSt, identity tag register of IR 453.

<sup>167</sup> DDSt, casualty returns NA 253; see also Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, coll. Sterz, letter home written by Josef H. (FP 39094) on 7 Aug. 1942.

<sup>168</sup> DDSt, identity tag registers of GEB 453, GEB 464, GEB 473.

<sup>169</sup> See Ralf Blank in the present volume.

<sup>170</sup> Typical examples can be found in the following case histories: BA-ZNS, WStB Albert B., ID -1515158643; BA-ZNS, WStB Josef H., ID 925454225; BA-ZNS, WStB Hugo F., ID -890612674; BA-ZNS, WStB Josef F., ID -122708600; BA-ZNS, WStB Wilhelm K., ID 928735763; BA-ZNS, WStB Theodor A., ID -1897012958.

eastern front, and at the same time recruited volunteers.<sup>171</sup> For officers in the 253rd ID recovering from wounds there was also, from August 1944, an order from military district VI seconding them for eight weeks during their convalescence to offices of the NSDAP, to boost cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the Party.<sup>172</sup> A major reason for this exchange of personnel between field units and duty stations on the home front—which while for only limited periods was still very intense—was the growing shortage of manpower in the Wehrmacht that was making it necessary to get the fullest possible use out of every man. At the same time, however, the sharing of experience that this made possible—precisely in this area of premilitary training for the Hitler Youth—should not be underestimated.

When the next convalescent transfer companies were being made up, the end of a secondment like this brought for many soldiers their return to their field unit in the area of operations. Normally, return was planned to the same duty station the soldier had been at before he was wounded.<sup>173</sup> In some circumstances, however, he might be moved to a new unit. Those whose fitness for service in the front line could not be fully restored were frequently sent to units in the rear where they could be given duties in line with their lessened capabilities. A particular characteristic of such postings to a different field unit was a change of theatre of operations determined by the nature of the wound. Members of the 253rd ID who had suffered severe frostbite, for example, might be sent to warmer regions such as to Italy or France for coastal protection duties, to the Balkans as occupation troops, or in 1942/3 to units of the Afrika Korps, so as not to be exposed to another Russian winter.<sup>174</sup> Some soldiers, after recovering and then being assessed as physically unfit for active duty, were excused further military service. Of the 204 discharges documented in the sample, 81 were via this procedure—around 3.5 per cent of the study group or 6.6 per cent of those wounded.<sup>175</sup> These involve only severely

<sup>171</sup> Soldiers from the 253rd ID served, after being wounded, as instructors at the HJ military training camps at Zweifall and Kohlscheid and at the Vogelsang 'Order Castle'. All three of these were in the Aachen area, see BA-ZNS, WStB Hugo vom H., ID 618838288; BA-ZNS, WStB Friedrich Z., ID -299768112; BA-ZNS, WStB Wilhelm W., ID -1151967876; BA-MA RH 21 4, instructions and suggestions for NSFOs leading discussion groups, 2 May 1944; NARA, T-314, Film 687, Frame 729. See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi, 93–4; Schubert-Weller, *Hitler-Jugend*, 201–2; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, i, No. 84, 104–5; *ibid.*, xx/xxi, No. 70, 170–1.

<sup>172</sup> Divisional order No. 37/1944 of 8 Aug. 1944, BA-MA RH/26 526 TU 0184/7, Div. No. 526; see Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 429–30.

<sup>173</sup> This is what happened to around 50 per cent of those wounded with the 253rd ID. See Chapter III.5(d) of this section.

<sup>174</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 686, Frame 132, XXIII Army Corps order of 11 Nov. 1942; divisional order No. 10/1944 of 9 Mar. 1944, BA-MA RH/26 526 TU 0184/07.

<sup>175</sup> The figures are derived from the discharge procedure stated in the service record books. For the 2,291 soldiers in the sample there are 204 discharges documented, which by reason of re-conscriptions and fresh discharges relate to 192 individuals, see Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 61; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, v, No. 11; *ibid.*, xvii, No. 19; *ibid.*, xx/xxi, No. 28.



wounded men whose further employment in the Wehrmacht was no longer possible because of an amputation, head injury, damage to internal organs, or other grave health impairments. There was a further group of 86 who, without being wounded, were released from military service on grounds connected with the war industry—albeit most for only a limited period. Apart from arms-industry specialists this group was dominated—in keeping with the division's recruiting catchment area—by soldiers released to work in the mines.<sup>176</sup> The two groups developed in opposite ways. While releases to industry were concentrated in the years 1939–42, those on the grounds of medical unfitness for active service played scarcely any part prior to 1941: they began to accumulate in 1942, and showed a sharply rising trend from then to the end of the war—in 1945 there were still 15 medical discharge procedures under way for earlier members of the 253rd ID.<sup>177</sup>

It is already clear that a wound or illness could mean a longish gap in the soldier's presence in the area of operations. The process of recovery and the attendant stays in hospital and moves, plus the time waiting for the assembling of a transfer company, could easily stretch over several months. On top of this there were for many soldiers several weeks of convalescent leave following their recovery. Although there has so far been no systematic study of this phenomenon, the entries in the men's paybooks show that, especially after the war against the Soviet Union began, convalescent leave after a wound was often the only opportunity of returning to spend some time with family and friends; the increasing shortage of men at the front meant that normal 'rest-and-recovery' leave was more and more seldom granted. In the 253rd ID there were already by 1942 reports compiled on troops who had not been given home leave for several years.<sup>178</sup> The proverbial 'Heimatschuß' (the British soldier's 'Blighty wound' and American GI's 'million-dollar wound') thus meant not only a temporary respite from the front but also gave the soldier—so long as he survived it—a brief reacquaintance with civilian life. Once the health of the wounded and ill was back to normal, the unfit and disabled had been filtered out and either discharged or moved to other duties, the post-convalescence veterans were—despite the handicaps and difficulties described—reassembled in the division's replacement units, available to be sent back into combat.

#### (e) *Dying, and Death*

It was not only wounds, mutilation, and illness that were part of life for the soldiers: death coming in a variety of ways was a constant feature of daily existence. Of the soldiers covered in our sample, 682 can be counted among the lasting military casualties; 369 of them died during the war, 313 were posted missing

<sup>176</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 288–9, 297.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. 623–4.

<sup>178</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 686, Frame 443; NARA, T-314, Film 1459, Frames 40–5; NARA, T-314, Film 1459, Frames 348–51; NARA, T-314, Film 694, Frame 208. See Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 89–90; Müller-Hillebrand, *Personnel and Administration* (Project 2a), Study P-005, BA-MA ZA 1/1777, 79–80.



by their units. This represents just on 30 per cent of the sample, a figure close to those found on the basis of other sources for the losses of the division and of the Wehrmacht as a whole.<sup>179</sup> So far as can be reconstructed from personnel records, the great majority of those killed died immediately during combat or while being given first aid. Only around 6–7 per cent died in a rear-area hospital some long time after being wounded.<sup>180</sup> Of the 313 recorded as missing, 40 were listed as presumed dead after the end of the war, while the same number made their way back from captivity as POWs by the end of the 1940s.<sup>181</sup>

The causes of death can often be determined only inexactly, since the personnel records often show for those who died not in a hospital but already on the battlefield only the date of death; and the *Wehrpaß* (which was passed on to their families) would, out of consideration for the grieving relatives, show not the true cause of death but by giving this as a shot through the head or heart suggest a less agonizing ‘hero’s death’. In this way the Wehrmacht strove to create among the dead men’s families an image of death on the battlefield that was in line with the Nazi propaganda but that hardly matched the realities of life and death the soldiers knew.<sup>182</sup> Taking account of unresolved cases and causes of death that may have been disguised, we see a certain correspondence with the breakdown of types of wound. Death through the effects of exploding artillery shells and shell splinters was clearly far more common than being killed in direct contact with the enemy in close combat or by infantry weapons.<sup>183</sup> Death hacked a bloody swath across the battlefield, littered with bodies blown apart by artillery shells, men spilling their life-blood from massive stomach wounds or severed limbs, dying of wounds to the head, or fatally wounded in hand-to-hand fighting. The horrendous, almost impossible to quantify events of the German attack on the Soviet Union were played out, in the battles, in a context of daily, everyday death. In the first winter of the war there were in the 253rd ID also many instances of soldiers dying, during the often chaotic retreats in early 1942, of exhaustion, of a heart attack, or after a nervous breakdown, or simply giving up—a phenomenon scarcely to be seen in this form in later stages of the war.<sup>184</sup> In the first months of this war, in particular, being captured could also mean death. In the context of the

<sup>179</sup> See also Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 243.

<sup>180</sup> See Müller-Hillebrand, *Statistic Systems* (Project 4), Study P-011, BA-MA ZA 1/1784, 153–4.

<sup>181</sup> On this see further below in Chapter III.5(f) of this section.  
<sup>182</sup> AHM 1941, No. 1210, 649: ‘Although it was instructed in HM 1941, No. 481, that the closing entry in the *Wehrpaß* of those killed should state only the date and place of death, field troop units are still making additional entries on the cause of death that are bound to cause distress to the relatives they leave behind. As the *Wehrpaß* is forwarded to the family as a keepsake, field troop units are again ordered to follow this instruction to the letter.’

<sup>183</sup> From analysis of the 2,231 episodes of wounding recorded among the 2,291 troops.

<sup>184</sup> DDSt, casualty records of GR 453, 464, 473; interim report, 20 Mar. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 25; morning report, 21 Mar. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 25; report by 206th ID, 25 Feb. 1942, BA-MA RH 24 23 68. See Schneider, *Reaktionen*, 65–6. In this context we may however include an increase in suicidal behaviour shortly before the end of the war, see Rass, ‘Menschenmaterial – Sozialprofil’, 185–90.

brutal fighting in which the German invaders often came up against defenders whose fury had been further heightened by propaganda there is also evidence of treatment of German prisoners of war in contravention of international law.<sup>185</sup> During this period there were two instances in which soldiers of the 253rd ID who had been taken prisoner were killed by members of the Red Army immediately after capture.<sup>186</sup>

With greater distance from the front line, death took on a different face. Being killed in a battlefield situation was in the rear area matched by the ever present threat of attacks by partisans, landmines, and attacks from the air. Accordingly, the casualty figures for combat units and those serving in the rear differed greatly. In the signals section, for instance, there were hardly any deaths occurring in combat; here, most men died as a result of exploding landmines, bombing, or strafing by enemy aircraft.<sup>187</sup> Partisans, too, were a latent danger; throughout the campaigns on the eastern front troops working in support units died in combat in the 253rd ID's rear area. The early stages of transport back to Germany, when the soldiers thought they had escaped the dangers of the front line, could also bring death. This is documented in the case of the 253rd ID by the many deaths suffered during attacks and acts of sabotage on troop trains travelling on the stretch between Rzhev and Olenin, which took place especially from the spring of 1942 until the Wehrmacht's retreat from this area in February 1943.<sup>188</sup>

Two special groups, only very small in numbers, consisted of soldiers whose death was through suicide or execution. While it is not possible to discuss these at length here, the fate of these men can be briefly described: out of 42 men in the whole 253rd ID community condemned to death 18 can be shown to have been subsequently executed, and in two further cases this is likely. While seven of the men executed at the front were shot by firing squads, usually made up of members of their own units, the method of execution developed differently where the courts were concerned. At the beginning and end of the war executions were here too carried out by firing squad; but in 1943 and 1944 most of the condemned were guillotined.<sup>189</sup> It was in this way that seven of the 253rd ID's soldiers died in the prison at Cologne-Klingelpütz.<sup>190</sup> The 17 death sentences in field units were on three grounds. Nine were because of self-mutilation, where two sentences were ultimately carried out. Six related to desertion, with evidence of three being carried out. And three were the result of 'cowardice offences', with two actually acted upon. The sentences handed down in the replacement army units followed a similar pattern—out of 25 sentences, 22 were for offences of the kind mentioned above. On these, again, nine were finally carried out: while

<sup>185</sup> See Overy, *Russia's War*, 87; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 913–14; *ibid.* 1195.

<sup>186</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frames 440–1, 485–6; BA-MA RW/2 v. 205. For references to a comparable case in March 1943 see NARA, T-314, Film 681, Frame 201.

<sup>187</sup> DDSt, casualty records NA 253.

<sup>188</sup> DDSt, casualty records AR 253 and NA 253.

<sup>189</sup> See *Deutschland im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, iii. 96.

<sup>190</sup> BA-ZNS, Kartei Kriegsgräberfürsorge [war graves index], military district VI.

TABLE II.B.III.7. *Death sentences on soldiers of the 253rd ID*

Year	Field army			Replacement army		
	Carried out	Not carried out	Outcome unknown	Carried out	Not carried out	Outcome unknown
1939	—	—	—	—	—	—
1940	—	—	—	—	—	—
1941	—	2	—	—	—	—
1942	—	2	—	—	1	—
1943	—	3	—	8	3	—
1944	3	1	2	3	10	—
1945	4	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7	8	2	11	14	—

TABLE II.B.III.8. *Suicidal Actions*

	Attempt	Suicide	Total	Field unit	Replacement unit
1939	—	2	2	2	—
1940	4	9	12	4	9
1941	3	3	6	4	2
1942	—	6	6	3	3
1943	—	6	6	4	2
1944	1	7	8	2	6
1945	—	1	1	—	1
Total	8	34	42	19	23

all the sentences on grounds of self-mutilation were rescinded or commuted, the replacement army's military courts ordered the carrying out of seven of the 12 death sentences for 'cowardice offences' and two of those connected with desertion.<sup>191</sup>

Of the 42 suicidal actions that took place within the 253rd ID and its replacement units, 34 ended in the death of the soldier while eight remained an attempt.<sup>192</sup> The constant availability of firearms undoubtedly contributed to shooting having been the method most commonly chosen; strangulation, jumping from a great height, or throwing oneself under a train remained the exception.<sup>193</sup> Three main motives can be made out: first fear of punishment,

<sup>191</sup> See Rass, "‘Menschenmaterial’: Sozialprofil", 302–3.

<sup>192</sup> See Nedoschill, 'Suizide', 33–4, 42–3, 61–2.

<sup>193</sup> See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, xviii, No. 39, 92–3.

secondly the hardships of military service proving too much, and thirdly mental breakdown resulting from traumatic experiences in the war.<sup>194</sup>

Finally we may look briefly at accidents, which came about through a large number of men, armed and with a great many vehicles, needing to interact with each other in coordinated fashion or within a confined space. Mishaps with weapons or munitions during training were just as commonplace in the replacement units as were the many instances in field units of soldiers being wounded or killed by the inadvertent firing of weapons or exploding of munitions. The cases documented in the division's military court and the casualty records, of deaths through carelessness when driving or handling weapons and munitions, highlight this largely neglected part of the soldier's daily existence.<sup>195</sup>

Like being wounded, the death of a soldier sparked off a chain of events. When the division's military situation allowed, the men were buried in military cemeteries set up in the area where they had died. In critical battle situations, however, and especially after the great retreats began in 1943, this became less and less possible, such that a growing number of the dead were buried in makeshift graves on the battlefield, cremated, or had to be left behind after one half of their identity tag had been removed.<sup>196</sup> The division then gathered together and sealed any personal documents that could be found on the body, the *Wehrpass* service book, and if it could be retrieved also the man's paybook, and sent these together with a final extract from the personnel roster recording the soldier's death to the relevant original recruiting/induction office, which on the basis of these made the final entries in the *Wehrstammbuch* (the office copy of the man's service record). At the same time reports of the event went to the Wehrmacht information centre via the casualty-reporting channels.<sup>197</sup>

One field that remains largely unexplored is how the death of a soldier was dealt with in everyday circumstances between the institutions of the state and the man's relatives. The family was informed of their relative's death by letters from the recruiting office, and in many cases also from the man's superior officer. Where he had been killed, and not posted as missing, they were sent his *Wehrpass* to keep.<sup>198</sup> The Wehrmacht made a clear distinction between the 'honourable' and 'dishonourable' deaths of soldiers. The families of those killed were not only told in letters from various offices that the death had been 'for the Führer and Reich',<sup>199</sup> but also taken in hand by a comprehensive welfare bureaucracy that dealt with the social and financial assistance due to

<sup>194</sup> See Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil', 185–9.

<sup>195</sup> BA-ZNS, RH/26 253 G; DDSt, casualty records of 253 ID.

<sup>196</sup> Examples include BA-ZNS, WStB Johann H., ID 661689410; BA-ZNS, WStB Fritz J., ID 1052969501.

<sup>197</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 13–14.

<sup>198</sup> See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, viii, No. 25, 88–9, 95–6; *ibid.*, xx/xxi, No. 35, 61–2; *ibid.*, No. 53, 109–10.

<sup>199</sup> BA-ZNS, WStB Erich W., ID 1326192411, letter from the officer for the military district, Wehrmeldeamt Mettmann, 28 Apr. 1942.

them as a result of the soldier's death. There was besides this the posthumous awarding of medals and decorations, and marriages with the fallen and missing were also possible. The death of a soldier by execution or suicide for 'dishonourable' motives, on the contrary, led to discrimination against those he left behind, as was also the case, with limitations, where soldiers posted missing were suspected of having deserted. One remarkable feature of this discrimination was (besides the loss of any material compensation) the ban on the family making the death of its member known by a death notice, so that by denying them the dubious attributes of a hero's death the loss they had suffered would be robbed of having any meaning for them.<sup>200</sup>

(f) *'Missing' and 'Taken Prisoner'*

Behind the number of the missing lies not least a further facet of the soldier's life—capture and becoming a prisoner of war.<sup>201</sup> A soldier was posted missing when the Wehrmacht could no longer find any trace of him but his death could not be confirmed beyond doubt. While there is no case in the sample of the whereabouts of a man becoming known while the war was still on, the indexes compiled by the German Red Cross after it ended illustrate the differing fates that a soldier's disappearance and a casualty return could conceal. For 313 men in the sample (13.7 per cent) who were posted missing it was possible in 25.6 per cent of cases to report the outcome: 12.7 per cent ended up in captivity and survived the war, while the same number were subsequently declared dead.

The total, obtained from the available sources, of 5,679 taken prisoner and missing is made up on the one hand of 2,187 soldiers of the 253rd ID whose fate could not be ascertained after the end of the war. On the other there were 3,492 men who had belonged to the division for a time and, irrespective of their later unit, had been taken prisoner but survived captivity and returned to Germany at a later date. Seen in relation to those missing and in captivity in the final months of the war it is possible, from the index of returnees and list of the missing, to identify for the 253rd ID a total of 2,920. Of these, 73 per cent were recorded by the German Red Cross after the war, while nothing further is known of the ultimate fate of the other 27 per cent.<sup>202</sup>

Soldiers who during their time in the Wehrmacht had served with the 253rd ID could after being taken captive end up with almost any of the Allied powers. They could be found in American and British POW camps in North Africa or in the USA, Canada, or Britain, and many spent their captivity in French camps. While most of the soldiers interned in the POW camps of the western Allies were released during 1945, matters were quite different for most of those in Soviet captivity.<sup>203</sup> The last troops of the 253rd ID became

<sup>200</sup> See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, xx/xxi, No. 118, 301–2; *ibid.*, viii, No. 25, 97; *ibid.*, xviii, No. 39, 92–3.

<sup>201</sup> See Overmans, *Soldaten hinter Stacheldraht*.  
<sup>202</sup> German Red Cross tracing service, list of missing for 253rd ID; *ibid.*, index of returnees for 253rd ID; see Overmans in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>203</sup> See Benz, *Leben hinter Stacheldraht*, 12–13; Chorkow, 'Zur Organisation des Kriegsgefangenenwesens', 455–63.

Soviet prisoners around 8 May 1945 in the area around Havlíčkův Brod, south of Prague.<sup>204</sup> Their units immediately ceased to exist as coherent formations, and although smallish groups of soldiers from the division did turn up in the same POW camps, they were as a whole spread over a large number of different sites in the Soviet Union. Two patterns can be discerned here: some were sent to localities that had been badly devastated by the Wehrmacht; these found themselves in transports to Stalingrad, Briansk, Leningrad, or Smolensk, though also to Orel' or Kovel'—regions where the division itself had been involved in combat operations. A larger contingent were however carried off to the large POW camps in the Urals, Siberia, or the Caucasus.<sup>205</sup> At about two-thirds of the known cases, the great bulk of these prisoners of war returned home in 1948 and 1949, while 13 per cent were already released in 1945 and 1946 and 20 per cent in 1947.<sup>206</sup> Probably the last of them from the 253rd ID to return home was their last commander, who had been sentenced as a war criminal in the Soviet Union and returned to Germany in 1955.<sup>207</sup>

For those who had been in the 253rd ID coming home from captivity brought an end to that part of their life story that had been directly marked by National Socialism, the Wehrmacht, and war. Yet one of them could still be confronted with his past in the division decades later; in the 1970s and 1980s, especially, many of the veterans reached pensionable age.<sup>208</sup> To have their service with the Wehrmacht taken into account when calculating their entitlement they turned to the *Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle* (ZNS), which had come into being in the meantime with as one of its main tasks the issuing of length-of-service certificates on the basis of the surviving personnel records.<sup>209</sup>

TABLE II.B.III.9. *Casualties (per cent) and lengths of time (days) in various branches*

Branch	<i>n</i>	Killed	Missing	Total casualties	Survived	Unknown	Time spent (days)
Infantry	1342	22.88	12.30	35.18	31.00	33.83	339
Anti-tank	210	24.29	9.05	33.34	27.14	39.52	334
Artillery	321	10.59	8.72	19.31	47.04	33.64	606
Signals	71	4.23	4.23	8.46	45.07	46.48	879
Supply	160	12.63	7.37	20.00	31.58	48.42	366
Administration	56	7.14	7.14	14.28	44.64	41.07	590

<sup>204</sup> German Red Cross tracing service, index of returnees for 253rd ID.

<sup>205</sup> See Epiphanov and Erwin, *Stalins Kriegsgefangene*, 25–9; Kuz'min, 'Die Unterbringung der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen', 91–105; Hilger, 'Deutsche Kriegsgefangene', 441–60.

<sup>206</sup> German Red Cross tracing service, index of returnees for 253rd ID.

<sup>207</sup> BA, Zentrale Rechtsschutzstelle B 305, doc. 33163.

<sup>208</sup> After the war there was a 253rd ID veterans' organization in Düsseldorf, but this ceased its activities in the 1990s, see *Deutsche Soldatenzeitung*, March 1955, No. 3, 11.

<sup>209</sup> See Dillgard, 'Die Zentralnachweisstelle des Bundesarchivs', 259–60.

In 586 (25.6 per cent) of the cases in the sample, ex-soldiers or their relatives were successful in making use of the services of the ZNS.

(g) *Structural Features of the Various Branches*

It has already become clear how important belonging to certain branches within the army could be for a soldier's time in the military. These in turn appear to have been dependent on a number of variables that link a soldier's origins with what happened to him, and that led not only to specific features in the social profile of different types of unit but also to those in the subsections of the overall divisional community living partly different lives.

The numbers of dead and missing (that is to say the permanent losses in various branches) set out in Table II.B.III.8, confirm in detail what has been noted so far.<sup>210</sup> Notwithstanding some lack of certainty due to cases where a soldier's fate remains unknown, the combat units show by far the highest losses and the lowest proportion of men who survived, while the signals section suffered the fewest casualties. Seen against the geographical and functional structure of the division, the tendency towards fewer casualties with increasing distance from the front line is obvious. The psychological environment and experience of war could thus, already within the narrow confines of a division's area (whose depth was at times less than 10–15 kilometres), differ substantially. The picture becomes even more marked if we consider how long a soldier stayed with these various units on average. The results differ in line with the dangers faced: as casualty numbers fall the average time in a unit rises, and there is consequently a link between the casualty rate, average length of time in a unit, and the rate of change in its social make-up. From this aspect as well the signals section stands out clearly as having the greatest stability: this variable, too, thus follows the geographical/functional gradation indicated earlier—the stability of social systems rises with increasing distance from the front line.

TABLE II.B.III.10. *Breakdown of personnel by generation and class*  
(per cent)

Branch	<i>n</i>	Pre-1910	1910-19	Post-1920	Middle-class	Working-class
Infantry	1342	9.84	68.63	21.54	23.85	76.15
Anti-tank	210	8.57	75.71	15.71	29.52	70.48
Artillery	321	9.03	72.59	18.38	21.50	78.50
Signals	71	7.04	63.38	29.58	46.48	53.52
Supply	190	42.11	52.11	5.79	28.95	71.05
Administration	56	35.71	58.93	5.36	25.00	75.00

<sup>210</sup> The figures have been obtained by analysis of the *Wehrstammbuch* service records, not the casualty records; see also Table II.B.III.1.



When correlated with generation, as seen in Table II.B.III.11, the quite different age structure and social origin of soldiers in the infantry and supply units become apparent. While as might be expected the effects of the Wehrmacht's personnel allocation policy are clear to see (the fittest age groups are concentrated in combat units), the most unusual age structure in the signals section—with the highest share of the youngest men—is striking. The explanation lies in the obvious connection between special qualifications, as a criterion when selecting men to work in the signals units, and their age group and social background. While only a very small number among the signals troops came from agriculture or had no occupational training, 85 per cent of them had worked in skilled trades in the crafts or industry or had been in middle-class occupations. They clearly shared three key qualifications: familiarity with current high technology, an easy ability with reading and writing, and understanding of how military communication procedures worked. A comparison of social class, as deduced from previous occupation, within the units makes the special position of the signals section even more obvious. In all branches of the army the breakdown of the soldiers into middle and working class follows the relationship seen in our sample. The signals section alone differs from the pattern; there, the middle class was at nearly 47 per cent greatly over-represented.<sup>211</sup>

The distribution of killed and missing over the age pyramid showed a clearly rising trend toward the younger age groups. While the casualties among those born before 1910 was only 15 per cent, this proportion rose among those born 1910–19 to 30 per cent, and for those younger still to as much as 35 per cent.<sup>212</sup> There is here an obvious parallel with the breakdown of generations across units with a differing risk potential. It may therefore be assumed that the higher casualties among the younger age groups were not due only to their on average later entry into the war—that is to say at a time of higher losses and less opportunity to build up important survival skills—but also to their structurally determined more dangerous conditions of deployment.<sup>213</sup>

All factors bear out the strong functional and geographical structuring of the area of operations. On a soldier's individual position in the system depended major conditions determining what life was like for him. If we consider the sequence from combat troops, through supply troops, to specialists, then first the degree of personal safety increased, secondly the rate of change in social make-up decreased, and thirdly the age of the soldiers rose. Only on the last point did the signals section differ; and it gave the soldiers the safest social environment of all the units considered here.

<sup>211</sup> See Chapter III.4(c) in this section.

<sup>212</sup> See Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 234.

<sup>213</sup> On the the first of these aspects see *ibid.* 251.

## 6. SOCIAL AND FUNCTIONAL GROUPS

(a) *Line Officers*

The task of an officer of the line was to ensure the efficiency of his soldiers as a military collective, to pass on orders for action, and together with them put these into effect.<sup>214</sup> As with the NCOs and other ranks, the Wehrmacht's officer corps too underwent social change in the course of the war. The accompanying loosening of social homogeneity in this second group of Wehrmacht personnel, an important one in both numbers and function, prompts the question of how far such processes were similar or different between the officers and other ranks, and what consequences this had on the social fabric of units. It calls for a widening of the previous target group. While the officer sample, kept deliberately small, does not permit a dynamic picture to be drawn, it does make it possible to a certain extent to compare basic variables in the social make-up of the men in the lower officer ranks with the social profile of the NCOs and other ranks. Table II.B.III.II shows the distribution across the age groups and generations of officers in the sample.<sup>215</sup> More than 90 per cent of the subalterns in the 253rd ID came from the two youngest officer generations. The great majority were born in the years 1910–16, the core generation of the division's personnel, and had gained their military experience either in both the Reichswehr and Wehrmacht or in the Wehrmacht alone. Most of them were loyal or at least conformist followers of National Socialism.<sup>216</sup> Military district VI, the core recruiting catchment area for the 253rd ID, provided 72.3 per cent of the officers, that is to say a smaller proportion than in the rest of its personnel. The religious-denomination breakdown differs from that of the other ranks: in 4.6 per cent of cases there is no information given as to denomination, 56.9 per cent were Protestants, and 26.2 per cent Catholics, while 12.3 per cent of the officers gave it as 'gottgläubig' (a believer but of no particular denomination). These figures reflect the not untypical preponderance of Protestants among the Reich's elite, compared to the religious profile of the other ranks which was determined largely by the division's recruiting area.<sup>217</sup>

The social origins of the sample typified the almost total uniformity of the officer corps, the middle classes' greatly improved options for entering which could already be seen in the Wehrmacht, especially during the war. Before joining the army the officers had worked in occupations typical of the middle-middle to upper-middle class, and this is borne out by the occupation

<sup>214</sup> See Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 40–63; Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 333; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 922–3; Oetting, *Motivation und Gefechtswert*, 115; Birgler, *Der einsame Soldat*, 248–9. The following pages look at officers up to the level of those leading a battalion; no analysis was made at commander level.

<sup>215</sup> Derived from Kroener, 'Generationserfahrungen', 229–33, or in Chapter III.4(a) of this section. See Thoß, 'Menschenführung', 113–38; Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, vii, No. 32, 63–4; Petter, 'Militärische Massengesellschaft', 365–6.

<sup>216</sup> See Kroener, 'Strukturelle Veränderungen', 272–95. See also the chapters by Winfried Heinemann in the present volume.

<sup>217</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 935.

TABLE II.B.III.II. *Distribution of officers, by generation*

<i>n</i>	Generation	per cent	Years	per cent
—	up to 1889	—	up to 1899	9.2
6	1890-9	9.2	1900-9	7.7
23	1900-13	35.4	1910-19	64.6
36	after 1914	55.4	after 1920	18.5
65	Total	100.0	Total	100.0

of their fathers. Only two of the officers had fathers in what could be classed as working-class jobs; both of them had however already fought in the First World War. One had been discharged as a lieutenant in the reserves, and the other had been serving in the police for twenty years.<sup>218</sup> Accordingly all officers for whom there is information on their schooling fulfilled the minimum educational requirements, meaning that they had left secondary education with the *Abitur* or a comparable leaving certificate.<sup>219</sup>

Forty-three per cent of the officers had belonged to National Socialist organizations; this figure is thus close to the 46 per cent found for middle-class men among the NCOs and other ranks.<sup>220</sup> A further indicator is the assessment of their 'National Socialist convictions' by their superiors, a prescribed part of officer assessments between November 1942 and July 1944.<sup>221</sup> For 34 of the 65 officers there are in all 135 assessments, made at various stages in their careers. In the papers of 27 of the 28 officers for whom assessments over this period are available, opinions are expressed on the subject's ideological attitude. Nine of these officers were members of Nazi organizations, and with eight of these the superior carrying out the assessment refers to this. Since the text of the assessment report often only follows the wording used in the instructions laying down the assessment of National Socialist convictions, it is hard to tell whether the passages in question have to be seen as stock phrases that had to be there in the assessment if this was not later to have adverse consequences, or whether they actually do describe the reality. There are two things that can provide a clue. First, a distinction can be made between assessments that follow the wording used in the text of the instructions and those where differently phrased expressions of opinion appear. While in the first case a simple repeating of the prescribed text makes it difficult to judge how far the man really believed in National Socialism, in the second it seems likely there was a real affinity with National Socialism on the part of the subject

<sup>218</sup> BA-ZNS, PA ID -1913906374; BA-ZNS, PA ID-1126206638.

<sup>219</sup> See Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 54-5, showing similar results.

<sup>220</sup> See *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 938-9; see also Chapter III.4(c) of this section.

<sup>221</sup> AHM 1942, No. 976, 533; AHM 1944, No. 376, 219; activity report of army personnel office, 24/5 June 1943, 75. See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 677; Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 329; Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 424-5; Welcker and Zelinka, *Qualifikation zum Offizier?*, 61-2, 96-113.

and/or his assessing officer.<sup>222</sup> Among the nine officers who had been members of Nazi organizations, for instance, only one was given an assessment that followed the wording of the instruction—in all the other cases the phrasing is tailored to the officer being assessed.<sup>223</sup> And secondly, on the other side of the coin, it is noticeable that none of the available officer assessments speaks of a negative or critical attitude to National Socialism.<sup>224</sup>

As intermediaries between the institutional levels of command and those carrying out their orders, the lower officer ranks were also predestined for their role by a series of interesting attributes: by social origins and training they were rooted in an officer corps the structural change in which is typified by our sample. Further characteristics made it easy for them to form the necessary emotional bond with their men. They for the greater part display, for instance (despite any possible differences due to religious affiliation), a similar regional origin and background to the troops in the other ranks, and had a similar age profile. Yet there were also things that clearly set them apart from the soldiers, and can be seen down to the level of physical features and military status symbols. It was not just the rank, duties, and power of command placing them higher up the military hierarchy that made them stand out from their men; the officers in the 253rd ID were, with an average height of 176.4 centimetres, markedly taller than the men in the other ranks, who averaged 170 centimetres. Further, the officers received a higher number of decorations than the men; while the latter had been on average awarded 2.9 medals and other decorations, the average for the officers was 3.8 awards. If we take military decorations as a yardstick for the forming of a hierarchy within military structures in which respect and prestige rise with the number of decorations won, then in this respect the officers were always one step ahead of their men.<sup>225</sup>

As a social group the line officers thus display specific features that affected not only their ability to act as a link between the command structure and the soldiers in the field, but also positioned them within the social profile of their units. The comparison with other social groups among the division's personnel becomes more complete when we bring in the pattern of the line officers' movements and careers. Already before the attack on the Soviet Union 73.8 per cent of the 253rd ID's officers had been with the division; the remaining 26.2 per cent joined their units after June 1941 as replacements. In the first group 15 officers had served in the army of the Kaiser or the Reichswehr, 8 of them being transferred from the Reichswehr to the Wehrmacht in 1935. A further 28 had done their compulsory military service between 1935 and 1939, or had signed on for longer terms; 22 had however been inducted for the first time only after 1939. Thus 66.2 per cent

<sup>222</sup> *Tätigkeitsbericht des Heerespersonalamtes*, 75.

<sup>223</sup> BA-ZNS, PA ID -1942756947; BA-ZNS, PA ID -1489328121; BA-ZNS, PA ID -1370011321; BA-ZNS, PA ID -1269235025; BA-ZNS, PA ID 390912701; BA-ZNS, PA ID 403292371; BA-ZNS, PA ID 950085232; BA-ZNS, PA ID 953713338; BA-ZNS, PA ID 953797040.

<sup>224</sup> See Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 438–40.

<sup>225</sup> See Model, *Der deutsche Generalstabsoffizier*, 135–6.

of the officers had already done their training before the Second World War started, and the rest had received it or begun it during the war.<sup>226</sup> In the course of the war 43 per cent of the officers studied had risen to lead a battalion or to higher positions, while 67 per cent remained in the lower officer ranks: 9 were promoted to major and one to lieutenant-colonel, 19 ended their career as a captain, and 37 finally advanced no further than second or first lieutenant. These structures reveal a process of selection within the younger officer corps. The first part of this, the 'testing at the front', was the most dangerous stage of the officer's life. While they led various groups in the combat units and advanced step by step from lieutenant to captain, it was not least their assessment reports that decided whether—assuming they were by then still fit for active service—they were, having met the requisite military and ideological requirements, able to rise to the higher ranks and take on corresponding command duties. Those who had not, or not yet, managed to clear this hurdle remained in the subaltern ranks until promotion, death, or the end of the war, and there made up the bulk of the line officers.<sup>227</sup>

Comparing the patterns of line officers' movement within the Wehrmacht with those of the other ranks shows important differences between the two groups. First, we find among officers too the tendency to the shortest times being spent in the combat units, and longer periods in support units. Thus the length of time officers stayed in one posting averaged 243 days with the infantry, 180 with the artillery, 503 days with the signals section, and 590 days with supply units. The length of time that officers belonged to infantry and artillery units was a good deal shorter than the average among soldiers in the other ranks of 339 and 606 days respectively. The figures for officers with supply units however differed from this pattern; for them, in respect of both individual duty stations and the total time spent with the 253rd ID's supply units the figure was quite a lot higher than that of 366 days for the other ranks. This can presumably be attributed to the fact that during reorganizations the supply-unit officers, who were mostly older and more specialized in what they did, were unlike some of the other ranks on supply duties not moved to combat units but stayed where they were, doing the same work. The officers in infantry, artillery, and signals units thus spent between 1.5 and 1.8 years with the 253rd ID before leaving the division through a posting out or being killed. The most common reason for leaving was a transfer to the officer pool known as the 'leader reserve', in which they were prepared for new duties or awaited fresh deployment.<sup>228</sup>

During the time with the division a command lasted on average 0.4 to 0.6 of a year. This is in line with the six months with a combat unit, required from 1942 on, after which an officer who had served well there could be promoted.<sup>229</sup> The time between promotions was however shorter for a number of

<sup>226</sup> See Kersting, 'Wehrmacht und Schule', 438–9.

<sup>227</sup> See Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 330–1, 335–6.

<sup>228</sup> See Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, i, No. 26, 29–30. Officers spent an average of 200 days in schools or on courses.

<sup>229</sup> See Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 330.

the officers studied, especially after 1942, and is a sign of an increasing shortage of fresh officer material.<sup>230</sup> The step up to a higher rank, and taking over a new command that it could involve, often meant a posting for the officers in question and a shift from their previous social environment to a new one, while their earlier post now needed to be filled.

Besides the casualties among the officers it was most of all the promotion roundabout turning ever faster that led to the line officers not remaining with the units they had taken over at a given point in their career. From the viewpoint of the men in the other ranks, who on average stayed with their units a good deal longer, this could therefore hardly have been a factor making for personnel continuity. Instead, the short spells they had with a unit gave the impression that the officers with whom the men had daily dealings changed comparatively rapidly. We can take as examples of this pattern the careers of officers like Wilhelm Viehmann and Heinz Crusius, who both joined the 253rd ID in August 1939 and were taken into the active officer corps. Crusius, born on 3 May 1916 to a middle-class family in Leipzig, served from the inception of the 253rd ID until his death without a break, first as second and then as first lieutenant for two and a half years in 4 Company of the 453rd Infantry Regiment. He was moved for just on a month to the division's reconnaissance section, before taking over his last command with the second battalion of the 473rd Infantry Regiment; it was to last only nine days. He had already during the campaign in the west been awarded the Iron Cross second class, was given the first-class Iron Cross shortly after the attack on the Soviet Union, and the infantry assault badge not long after that. In January 1942 he distinguished himself by showing bravery as company commander during the defence of an important strongpoint, and for that was listed in the army's honour roll on 1 March 1942. Only a few weeks later, however, he met his fate when at the age of 25, on 31 March, he died of a fatal wound. He was now posthumously awarded the Knight's Cross, while his family was paid RM794.60 as interim assistance and reimbursement of expenses.<sup>231</sup>

His comrade in the division, Wilhelm Viehmann, was likewise born in 1916, and his father—a Cologne businessman—was killed in March 1918 near Cambrai. After finishing his school education Viehmann was conscripted into the RAD, and from there moved to the Wehrmacht. He did military service from 1936 to 1938, was discharged as a senior NCO (*Feldwebel*) and candidate officer in the reserve, and after refresher training in early 1939 made a lieutenant in the reserve. When war started he was called up, taken into the active officer corps, and posted to the 464th Infantry Regiment. In the various units of this regiment he within four years rose, gathering numerous decorations and a wound in October 1943—with each promotion taking place against a background of extremely positive military and political assessment reports—from lieutenant leading a platoon to major and battalion commander. It was in this

<sup>230</sup> This is shown by 414 promotions among the officer sample.

<sup>231</sup> BA-ZNS, PA ID -1553496425.



rank that in mid-1944 he took over command of 464 Infantry Regiment in the 253rd ID, to become commander of the division in December of the same year when promoted to lieutenant-colonel at the age of only 28. After the division's capitulation in May 1945 near Prague Viehmann made his way towards units of the US army, who finally took him prisoner. When the war was over he wrote under the US Army Foreign Military Studies Program, while still a prisoner of war, a study of his war experiences on the eastern front.<sup>232</sup>

An interesting contrast to these examples from combat units is again provided by a comparison with conditions in the signals section. The impression of a rapidly changing officer corps must here have been less strong; for although the signals section officers stayed with the 253rd ID for almost the same time as those in combat units, each of them spent virtually the whole of their time with the division in one and the same duty station, without being moved within the division (in order, say, to replace missing infantry officers). This may be attributed to their specialization, or to their being given longer probation periods. On top of that, the highly qualified personnel of the signals section were generally very hard to replace, so that the division took active steps to avoid their being moved.

When considering their position in the social structure, there is one general difference to be seen between the officers in combat units and those in the support units. The former group were in the part of the division where leadership, the imposing of discipline, and with it the using of the range of tools of military rule were critical factors for the ability of the units to function efficiently. The officers in this area changed markedly more often than the men in the other ranks. The latter group in the officer corps, the specialists serving in the rear, changed far more slowly and compared to those in combat units remained in place almost twice as long. The lower-level leaders in the military system, especially those in combat units, were thus a very mobile element in the social fabric, and the part of the social structure with the lowest degree of continuity. This meant that among the subalterns, depending on their duties, a far-reaching standardization of capabilities and attitudes had to be aimed at, on the basis of which they could be interchanged without this having an adverse effect on the troops' effectiveness. The reason for an officer being replaced—posting-out, promotion, or death—was from the viewpoint of the men under him (and also that of the upper levels of command, where the primary objective was the operational effectiveness of a unit) of secondary importance. What was important was the replaceability of the line officers within the social and functional structure. With regard to continuity within social groups, this finding suggests the existence of a segment in the command personnel that was marked by a higher degree of personnel continuity and consequently, despite the rapid changes of officers, helped to maintain the structural continuity of command. In the units of the Wehrmacht, just as in other military organizations, this task was taken on not least by the non-commissioned officers.

<sup>232</sup> BA-ZNS, PA 57329; NARA, Foreign Military Study P-149/48, Viehmann, Wilhelm, 'Nachtangriff mit einer geschwächten, ungeübten Truppe'.



TABLE II.B.III.12. *Age groups within the NCO corps (as per cent)*

Born	Sample	NCOs
Before 1909	13.92	10.63
1910-19	65.26	78.47
After 1920	20.82	10.90
Total	100.00	100.00
<i>n</i>	2,291	780

*(b) Non-Commissioned Officers*

The lowest level of command was formed by those in the non-commissioned officer corps, who as 'officers' assistants'<sup>233</sup> played an important part in the leading of the military units of the Wehrmacht.<sup>234</sup> The high value placed on this tranche of the command personnel, occupying the space between the rank-and-file troops and the officers, can be seen from the manifold moves made to ensure their effectiveness, through selection, training, and the preserving of a certain group identity even under the increasingly difficult war-time conditions for personnel replacement.<sup>235</sup> The NCO corps came up from the other ranks, but as a group of professional soldiers they remained through rank, length of service, and social status clearly apart from both the 'common' soldiers and the officers, and acted as a link between the leaders and the led.<sup>236</sup> This is the background to the study of the social profile of this group, the mechanisms by which it was selected, and the patterns of movement of its members.

The distribution of NCOs across the three main generations in the sample, shown in Table II.B.III.12, features a clear preponderance of the age groups born between 1910 and 1919, with half those in the NCO ranks coming from 1913-16, the first age group to be called up to serve in the Wehrmacht after 1935. The social origins of the NCOs, judged from their occupations at the time of registering for service, suggest a social grading basically similar to that of the whole sample. Around 35 per cent of the NCOs can be seen as lower-middle-class, and the remaining 65 per cent as working-class. The middle class's share in the NCO corps is however thus some 10 per cent higher than in the total group under study.<sup>237</sup>

Where membership of the NSDAP and its divisions is concerned, around one-third of the NCO corps (with no differences over time) had before joining the Wehrmacht belonged to at least one of the National Socialist organizations,

<sup>233</sup> *Wörterbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte*, ii. 1013.

<sup>234</sup> See *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes*, 13.

<sup>235</sup> See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 424.

<sup>236</sup> See Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 121-2; Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 422-5; Driftmann, *Grundzüge*, 178-9; Lahne, *Unteroffiziere*, 486-7.

<sup>237</sup> See Table II.B.III.13. The distribution is in line with that in Table II.B.III.5.

a figure that is close to that of 34.6 per cent found for the entire sample.<sup>238</sup> This does not mean that Nazi ideology can be assumed to have had only minor importance among the NCOs; it was rather a matter of the Wehrmacht leadership working during the war to overlay their traditional concept of their role with Nazi elements. In this connection we can see three different areas where this had an effect: first, the NCOs were to be at the core of a Wehrmacht remodelled in line with National Socialist thinking, and at the same time become a link between the cadres of the Nazi organizations and the army. Secondly, they were intended to play a decisive role in indoctrinating the youths delivered to their charge as recruits and young soldiers. And thirdly, they had been made ready to become, in the occupied territories and especially those in the east, one of the spearheads of German occupation and of a post-war order imposed by the Third Reich in the German *Lebensraum*.<sup>239</sup>

From this and tracing the military career of the NCOs we can arrive at a few conclusions as to the selection criteria the Wehrmacht used in recruiting its non-commissioned officers. Of the 2,291 soldiers in the sample, rather more than a third rose to non-commissioned rank during the war, and of these a further 30.9 per cent reached the upper NCO ranks. Out of the 780 in the NCO corps, 74.4 per cent had already received military training prior to 1939, in either the Reichswehr or the Wehrmacht.<sup>240</sup> This first generation of NCOs was joined, around 1942, by a second generation drawn mainly from those born after 1920. This latter group ultimately made up 25.6 per cent of the division's non-commissioned officer corps. From the spread of time over which they make their appearance it can be seen that although these two generations of NCO differ in their level of experience and to some extent also qualifications, the succession of the generations was fluid rather than abrupt. Even among those promoted to NCO rank between 1941 and 1945, the soldiers trained before the war remained at all times in a clear majority. This explains why the proportion of members of Nazi organizations among the NCOs was not more than averagely high. The age groups that our analysis of membership across the division indicates as having a particularly high incidence of those who belonged to the NSDAP and its divisions were only poorly represented among the NCOs.<sup>241</sup>

The divergence from the overall sample found in the social stratum of the NCOs prompts the question of whether there was a connection between social origin and advancement to non-commissioned rank. The breakdown

<sup>238</sup> Only 27.8 per cent of the sergeants had been in divisions of the Party.

<sup>239</sup> As set out in a book published on behalf of the OKH in 1943 and aimed at the Wehrmacht's NCOs: Paulssen, *Der Unteroffizier*, 21, 25–6, 38, 44. Similarly Flemming, *Der Unteroffizier*, 70–1; *Heeres-Verwaltungstaschenbuch*, 124–5; see Absolon, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten*, ix, No. 5, 9–10.

<sup>240</sup> See Driftmann, *Grundzüge*, 177–8.

<sup>241</sup> For an opposing view see Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 87. The author assumes that convinced Nazis were over-represented among the NCOs. Such a result is doubtless related to the social profile of the NCOs who were interviewed, and does not allow of any conclusions as to the views held among the NCOs of individual units.

TABLE II.B.III.13. *Social origin of non-commissioned ranks*

	Sample		Junior NCOs		Senior NCOs	
	<i>n</i>	per cent	<i>n</i>	per cent	<i>n</i>	per cent
Middle class	485	21.17	265	33.97	113	46.89
Working class (secondary sector)	1492	65.12	454	58.21	121	50.21
Agriculture (farmers and farm labourers)	294	12.83	56	7.18	7	2.90
Other	20	0.87	5	0.64	—	—
Total	2291	100.00	780	100.00	241	100.00

of social class set out in Table II.B.III.13, comparing the total sample, junior NCOs (i.e. those below the rank of *Feldwebel*), and senior NCOs, shows clearly the growing dominance in the NCO corps of certain social groups, and underlines the importance of social origin as a selection criterion. Compared to the division's personnel as a whole, the middle class was distinctly over-represented throughout the NCO corps. To recruit senior NCOs, a fresh selection was made from the pool of junior NCOs, which led to a strengthening of the existing tendency. For the senior NCO ranks the proportion of civil servants and those in middle-class occupations rose sharply again, while that of unskilled workers fell at the same time to almost half. The balance between middle and working class as a result almost evened out in the this junior NCO group, and is thus in clear contrast to the general social profile.

This emphasizes the social background of soldiers promoted from junior to senior NCO, shown in Table II.B.III.14; 67.7 per cent of the soldiers from the middle class rose to become junior NCOs, including all four of those in the sample who had worked full-time in National Socialist organizations, while only 30 per cent of those from the working class became NCOs and among those from agriculture the figure was as low as 17.5 per cent. The same tendency is seen, albeit in a less pronounced form because of the very much smaller size of this segment, in the choice of senior NCOs.<sup>242</sup> Military qualifications and social background were thus decisive for rising in the 253rd ID's NCO corps; and the social origins especially make clear the NCO's functional position between the troops and the officers. While the other ranks came predominantly from the working class, and the officers almost without exception from the middle to upper classes, those from the lower-middle class were—notwithstanding the numerical majority of working class in it—concentrated in the NCO corps.

<sup>242</sup> This shows particularly clearly what tended to happen with previous government employees, among whom 73.7 per cent of those who had risen to junior NCO rank were also promoted further to *Feldwebel*.

TABLE II.B.III.14. *Promotion prospects of junior NCOs ( per cent)*

Social group	In sample	Of sample, promoted to junior NCO	Of junior NCOs, promoted to senior NCO
Middle class	21.17	67.69	48.69
Working class (secondary sector)	65.12	30.14	26.43
Agriculture	12.83	17.50	7.95
Other	0.87	26.67	—
<i>n</i>	2,291	780	241

The time that the NCOs remained with their units is a clear indication of how much of a stabilizing element they provided in them. Table II.B.III.15 shows how long soldiers in the different ranks stayed with units in the various branches of the service. The first thing that becomes clear from looking at all the moves made by one of the NCO corps during his time with the 253rd ID is that his pattern of moves and chart of times spent in units by and large matches those of soldiers who were not promoted to NCO. After a promotion to NCO, however, the times that NCOs spent with individual units fell sharply. Among the infantry, in particular, these are close to the times found when analysing the changes among the officers. One reason may possibly be that being promoted heightened the risk of being in action. Against this, the time spent by NCOs with support units increased; this can in, for example, the signals section be put down in part to their specialization. The periods spent by the NCOs also show that having been with the division for a long while was also one of the criteria for being selected for promotion to non-commissioned rank.

The NCO corps accordingly occupied a midway position between the officers and the men. When this is combined with the observation that the sequence of the periods with individual units overlapped the soldiers' biographies and that consequently there were seldom any total breaks in continuity,

TABLE II.B.III.15. *Time spent with units by various ranks (in days)*

Branch	NCOs after promotion	NCOs overall	Sample	Officers
Artillery	526	686	606	180
Infantry	246	356	339	243
Signals section	1025	946	879	503
Supply services	198	360	366	—
Admin. services	254	499	590	—

the NCO's role in the Wehrmacht command system becomes even clearer.<sup>243</sup> It also confirms the comparison of the total times spent with the 253rd ID by other ranks, NCOs, and officers. While the rank-and-file soldiers belonged to the division for an average of 1,163 days, the figure for the NCOs averaged 1,281 days. The officers, on the other hand, belonged to the division for an average of 941 days—that is to say almost a year less than those in the other two categories. From the social profile of the NCO corps, seen against their pattern of movement, we can see how they were selected and positioned in the social structure. A generally early entry into the Wehrmacht and resulting military qualifications set the non-commissioned officers apart, even when the mass casualties made a regular NCO's training more and more difficult, from the broad bulk of the men, among whom this characteristic disappeared as the war progressed. With their social background the NCO corps began, as they were promoted, to differ more and more from the other ranks. The dominance of the middle class among them brought them closer to the officer corps (which was recruited almost exclusively from the upper classes), and at the same time facilitated their integration into the command structures; this once again highlights their function as the link between those giving the orders and those carrying them out. The patterns of the NCOs' movement within the Wehrmacht are however very much like those of the rank-and-file soldiers. The time they remained with a unit was exceeded only by the division's commanders themselves, while the line officers who worked directly with the NCOs changed postings very much more often. The lengthy periods served by the NCOs helped make up for the rapid changes among the line officers, and the non-commissioned officers became one of the important underpinnings of the social structure, not only linking the officers with the men but boosting the stability of the division's social fabric.

(c) *Primary Groups*

The core of the social framework of military units, and a difficult thing to really get a grasp on, lies in the relationships between the soldiers going together through a phase of their life that is frequently marked by extremes of experience.<sup>244</sup> Still something of a vague area in history research, it will be made accessible here through the concept of the 'primary group'. By this is understood small groups of soldiers within military units among whom, on the basis of their social profile and their common fate, very close social relationships or indeed bonds are developed, from which can spring a heightened level of group loyalty and capacity to function.<sup>245</sup> The term comes originally from sociology, and during the Second World War was used by scientists with the US Army in their studies of the military performance capacity of Wehrmacht formations; since then it has made its way into the areas of social and

<sup>243</sup> See Chapter III.6(c) of this section.

<sup>244</sup> See Lippert, 'Die kleine Kampfgemeinschaft', 7–14.

<sup>245</sup> See Oetting, *Motivation und Gefechtswert*, 78–9.

military history as well.<sup>246</sup> In recent research work it has been looked at in connection with the analysis of group cohesion or comradeship, and to a similar extent discussed in the context of seeking explanations for not only fighting performance but also the brutalizing of Wehrmacht units.<sup>247</sup> On the one hand the social bonds Wehrmacht soldiers felt with each other were a central pillar in the social structures and thus an important factor in a formation's capacity to operate. On the other there is not necessarily any contradiction between the existence of primary groups and the ideologizing or brutalizing of soldiers.<sup>248</sup> Rather more it was the dense network of social relationships between the troops that may very well have been a precondition for putting the German war of extermination into effect.<sup>249</sup> The question that has still not been answered is in what form and for how long primary groups in the Wehrmacht existed in a functioning form, and what effects their existence or disintegration may have had.<sup>250</sup> Discussion ranges between the demonstrated importance of social relationships within one's own unit for the Wehrmacht troops themselves, and the possible destruction of a lasting social environment by high casualties. The characteristics and duties of those in the command structure in immediate contact with the soldiers have already been discussed, and this section will concentrate on the social features of primary groups, and a demonstration of their existence at company level.<sup>251</sup>

Several features of the social groups being studied here, and of what their life was like, have already become clear. From the socio-cultural point of view the personnel of the 253rd ID showed a remarkable degree of homogeneity, which was to some extent maintained during the war as well.<sup>252</sup> These commonalities offered, across the generation boundaries, an integrating basis for social relationships. In addition, the dominance of one age group among the soldiers provided a core generation with which the year groups coming later could bond. One feature of the circulation of personnel was that losses of men from the division were to a large extent temporary and only to a lesser degree permanent; many of the soldiers who were wounded in fact returned to their old units after recovery. The study of personnel replacement has shown how important, besides the influx of replacement troops coming from a formation's recruitment catchment area, these returning convalescents were for maintaining the operational capability of a military formation. Even at times during the

<sup>246</sup> See also my Chapter I, n. 15 above; George, 'Primary Groups', 297.

<sup>247</sup> See Janowitz and Shils, 'Cohesion and Disintegration', 177–220; Janowitz and Little, *Sociology and the Military Establishment*, 93–4; Oetting, 'Motivation und Gefechtswert', 79; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 31, 38–9; Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 320; Braun, 'Rationale Akteure', 109, 113–19.

<sup>248</sup> See Chodoff, 'Ideology', 586–7.

<sup>249</sup> See Kühne, 'Kameradschaft', 506–7; id., 'Zwischen Männerbund und Volksgemeinschaft', 166–7.

<sup>250</sup> See Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 36–7; id., *Hitler's Army*, 57. For criticism of Bartov see Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 297–8; Kühne, *Der NS-Vernichtungskrieg*, 625–6.

<sup>251</sup> See George, 'Primary Groups', 303–5. The institutional mechanisms of command are discussed by Jürgen Förster elsewhere in the present volume.

<sup>252</sup> See Chapter III.4 of this section.

war when casualties were high, this meant that the absence of a large number of the men from a unit did not necessarily entail the permanent uprooting of its social structure. High casualties are thus not to be immediately equated with the break-up of primary groups and sundering of social relationships, with an attendant loss of group cohesion. This is also borne out by the lengths of time soldiers remained with the various sections within the division, and how long they stayed in individual duty stations.<sup>253</sup> With all the necessary caveats, this may be taken as a sign that during the war, especially in the first two phases of the Wehrmacht's social system,<sup>254</sup> there was a less dynamic fluctuation in personnel, less serious in its effects, than has previously been assumed. It was precisely in the broad mass of Wehrmacht formations, made up for the most part of conscripts, that such structures of social homogeneity and continuity were important for the ability to operate. There is a major difference here from Waffen-SS or paratroop formations, which for one thing were recruited on different principles and for another were able to forge their group identity within a far higher degree of ideological self-awareness or consciousness of being an elite. An investigation of the emergence, development, and disintegration of primary groups can start with looking at the phases of social development of the Wehrmacht.<sup>255</sup> Before the attack on the Soviet Union the structural development of the 253rd ID favoured the formation of stable social networks among the troops, and the growth of a strong group cohesion in this formative period from inception, through training, to going into action. The second phase began with the attack on the Soviet Union. After the sharp downturn in fortunes in the crisis winter of 1941/2, a fresh generation of soldiers taking the place of casualties had to be integrated into the existing structures.

The development of the core group is easy to trace through the awarding of 'Russian front medals' (the *Ostmedaille*), since veterans of the 'winter battle in the east' were as a result from May 1942 given a clear distinguishing badge that made them readily identifiable, both among themselves and by other soldiers and superior officers joining the division later, as being seasoned troops.<sup>256</sup> The group reached its maximum size with the decorating of the survivors, and from then on to the end of the war shrank in numbers through casualties and transfers. The slow disappearance of these veterans, as part of the general social development in the personnel, marks the transition from the first generation to the mixture of two generations that typified the social profile in the second half of the war. In 1942 the group of those in the sample who had been decorated numbered around 1,180. The chronology of their disappearance from the division describes the curve of military casualties from 1942 to 1945. When the war ended, there were still 105 (9 per cent) of these soldiers to be found in the division sample.<sup>257</sup> As a result, two groups came to

<sup>253</sup> On this see Chapter III.5(c) and 5(d) of this section.

<sup>254</sup> See Diagram II.B.II.1.

<sup>255</sup> See Chapter II of this section.

<sup>256</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 686, Frame 541. See Absolon, *Die Wehrmacht im Dritten Reich*, vi. 651.

<sup>257</sup> In the part-sample for January to May 1945, soldiers who had been awarded the eastern front medal made up 49.2 per cent.



typify the social profile: the remnants of the first primary groups made their appearance both in official military documents and in veterans' accounts described as 'an experienced corporal' or as 'a seasoned veteran of the Russian front'. Soldiers whose experience covered both the first phase of the war that brought the Third Reich successes and the early months of BARBAROSSA formed the nucleus within their units.<sup>258</sup> The young replacement troops filled out the gaps in their ranks; these soldiers were already recruited mainly from the age groups who had spent a large part of their life in institutions providing National Socialist education and socialization.<sup>259</sup> Consequently veterans brutalized by years of fighting and highly ideologically motivated replacement troops came, as the war progressed, to form the constituent elements of the social structure.<sup>260</sup>

More exact conclusions can be drawn from a detailed analysis of the change in social structure at the lowest possible level in the hierarchy,<sup>261</sup> taking as an example 1 Company of 464 Infantry Regiment in the 253rd ID.<sup>262</sup> The comments that follow are based on computer-based analysis of the identity tag registers of this unit from 1939 to 1945. This source makes it possible, for around 95 per cent of all soldiers who belonged to this company during the Second World War, to trace all postings to and from the company, together with basic data relating to individuals.<sup>263</sup>

The soldiers' periods of service, shown in Diagram II.B.III.6 where each vertical line defines the length of time one *soldier-unit* spent with the company,<sup>264</sup> give a picture of the social change. The original manning of the company in 1939 can be seen, as can the numerous postings to it and departures from it in the course of the war. The end-points of stays show clearly that of each group of soldiers arriving in the company at a given point in time, some belonged to it for a fairly short while, many for the average period, and quite a few for a very long time. At the end of the period under review,<sup>265</sup> the personnel consisted in part of men who had been with the company for very long, uninterrupted periods or even several periods of varying duration.

In total, the company's identity tag registers record some 1,700 periods of service relating to 1,545 individuals.<sup>266</sup> Up to November 1944 the company,

<sup>258</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 297–8.

<sup>259</sup> See Chapter III.4(d) of this section.

<sup>260</sup> For a similar view see Rush, 'A Different Perspective', 497.

<sup>261</sup> See Oetting, *Motivation und Gefechtswert*, 82.

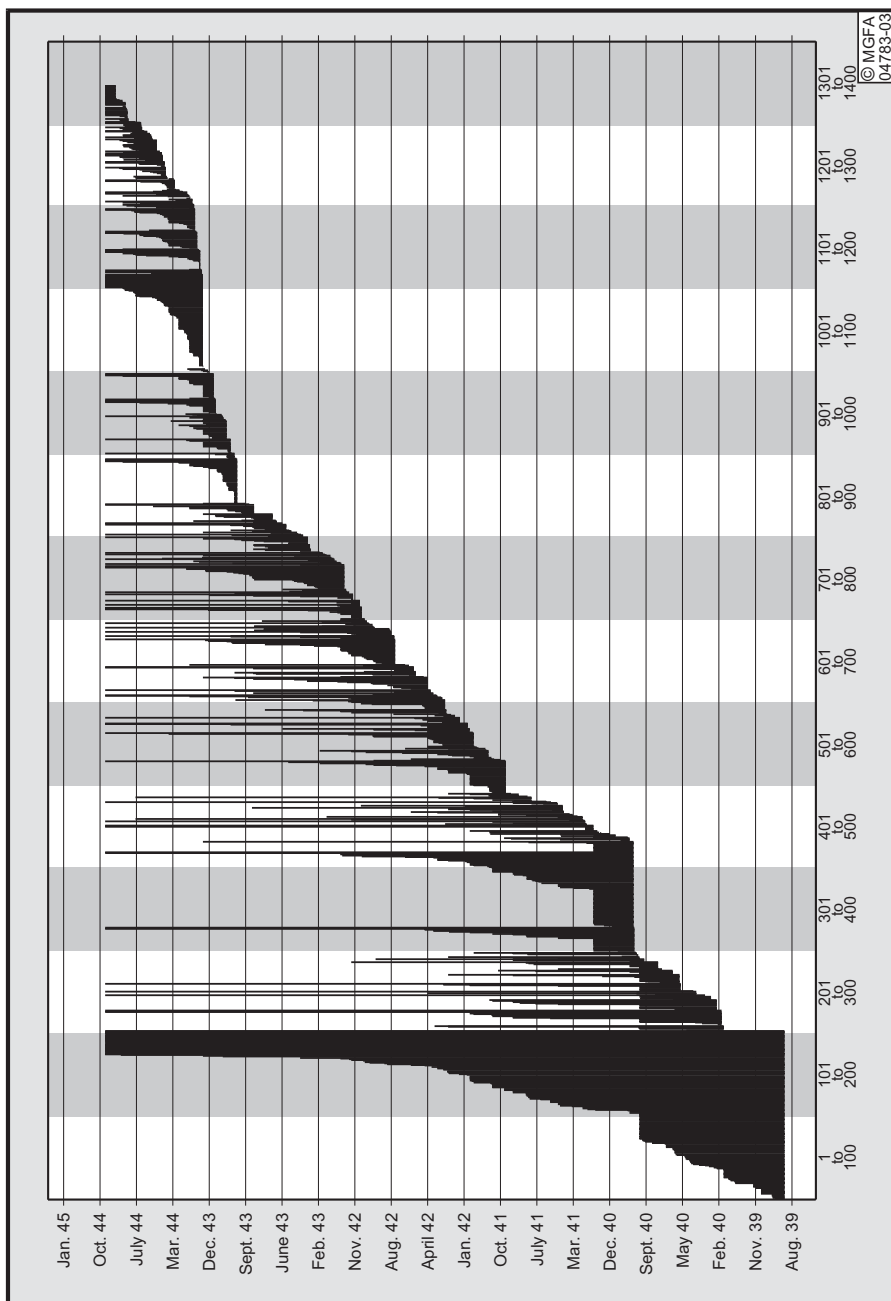
<sup>262</sup> See George, 'Primary Groups', 313. An empirical coverage of a social group over a longish period of time presents researchers with a difficult problem. Studying a company does not, it is true, get down to the level of the platoon or squad, but in view of the sources available it represents the best approach possible.

<sup>263</sup> DDSI, identity tag indexes of I/IR 464.

<sup>264</sup> Individuals thus appear as many times as they were transferred to the company.

<sup>265</sup> The end date chosen was November 1944, as the registers up to then provide very reliable data.

<sup>266</sup> These figures are unusually high for an infantry company, as it was evidently used as an assembly station for replacement troops during large-scale postings in October 1940, January 1944, and January 1945, before they were then transferred on to other companies in the regiment. A great many very short stays can be attributed to such procedures.



Source: Deutsche Dienststelle (WaSt), identity tag index of 1 Company, 464th Infantry Regiment, 1939-45.

Y-axis intervals are 100 days, which results in an uneven sequence of months.

DIAGRAM II.B.III.6. Lengths of stay in 1/IR 464  
(Sept. 1939-Sept. 1944;  $n = 1,339$ )

which had started the Second World War with a complement of around 200 men, took in just on 1,550 *soldier-units*<sup>267</sup> as replacements. At the same time 976 men were transferred to the replacement army or moved to other duty stations through being wounded, 244 were killed, and 75 were posted missing. On average a soldier, after first being posted to the company, returned to it 1.1 times,<sup>268</sup> and per period of attachment remained 193 days with this unit.<sup>269</sup> From these can be deduced a company strength curve closely matching that already described for the personnel-strength development of infantry units in the 253rd ID. Following a wave-form path, the headcount of the company dropped drastically several times during periods of military crisis, sometimes by one-half, to be then built up again by the advent of batches of replacements.

Of the total personnel, 54 per cent of the soldiers came from military district VI. At the start of the war the figure was around 85 per cent. There was thus a high degree of uniformity of geographical origin among the men in the company. By mid-1944 this had however fallen to 52 per cent, and it dropped further still by the end of the war.<sup>270</sup> Irrespective of place of birth, a group of about three-quarters of the company's total personnel that remained stable right up to the final stages of the war received their military socialization and training within the structures of the 253rd ID's divisional community before being posted to 1 Company of the 464th Infantry Regiment. Seen against the Wehrmacht's own standard, which saw a ratio of 2:1 of personnel from the core recruiting catchment area over those coming from elsewhere as a sufficient basis for generating group cohesion, the company thus fell below this mark only in the last third of the war.<sup>271</sup> Two factors however worked against any negative effects of this; first the length of stay of troops in the company and the intimacy this created,<sup>272</sup> and secondly the high number throughout of soldiers who (even when they did not come from military district VI) had been trained in the 253rd ID's replacement units and wherever possible had spent considerably longer in the structures of the divisional community before finally joining this company of the 464th Infantry Regiment.

Without a detailed analysis of a suitably large number of personnel records it is possible to offer only qualified comments as to the moulding effect of other variables such as membership of National Socialist organizations or the

<sup>267</sup> See Chapter III.2 of this section.

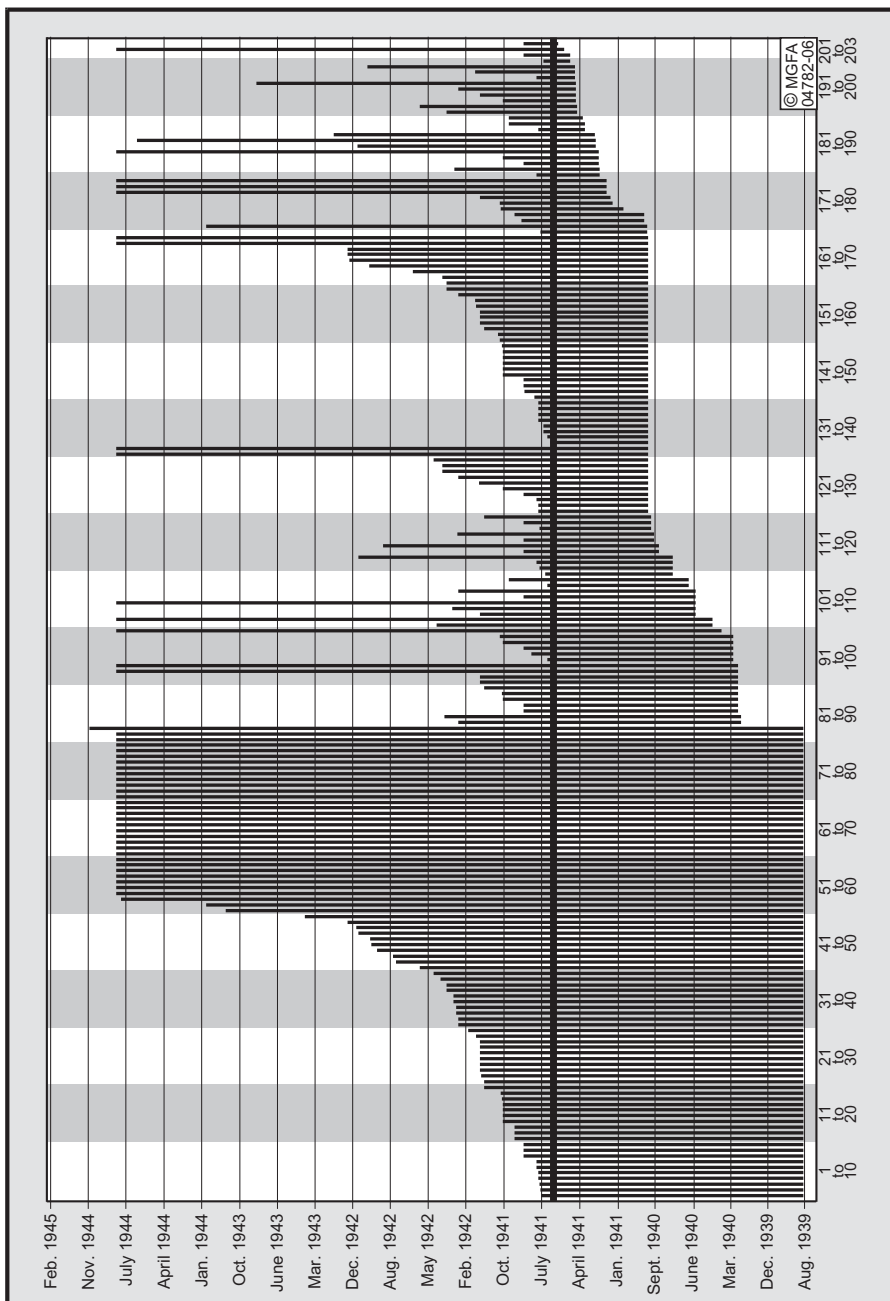
<sup>268</sup> This transfers-back figure gives the ratio of soldier-units per individual.

<sup>269</sup> If short-term periods due to the personnel distribution process are excluded, the average length of stay rises to 210 days.

<sup>270</sup> The US army dispensed entirely with regional recruitment, and with a link between replacement and field units, and in its structures the provision of replacements from recruit depots was at the level of individuals. In this case primary groups formed only on the basis of shared experience in the units, see Stouffer, *The American Soldier* (1949), 272-3; Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 76-9. On the British army see Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 123-4.

<sup>271</sup> See Hedler, *Aufbau des Ersatzwesens*, 137.

<sup>272</sup> See Stouffer, *The American Soldier* (1949), 97-100.



Source: Deutsche Dienststelle (WaSt), identity tag index of 1 Company, 464th Infantry Regiment, 1939–45. Y-axis intervals are 100 days, which results in an uneven sequence of months. The chart shows the length of stay (shown by black bars) of soldiers who belonged to the company in the second quarter of 1941.

DIAGRAM II.B.III.7. Lengths of stay of personnel  
from second quarter of 1941 ( $n = 203$ )

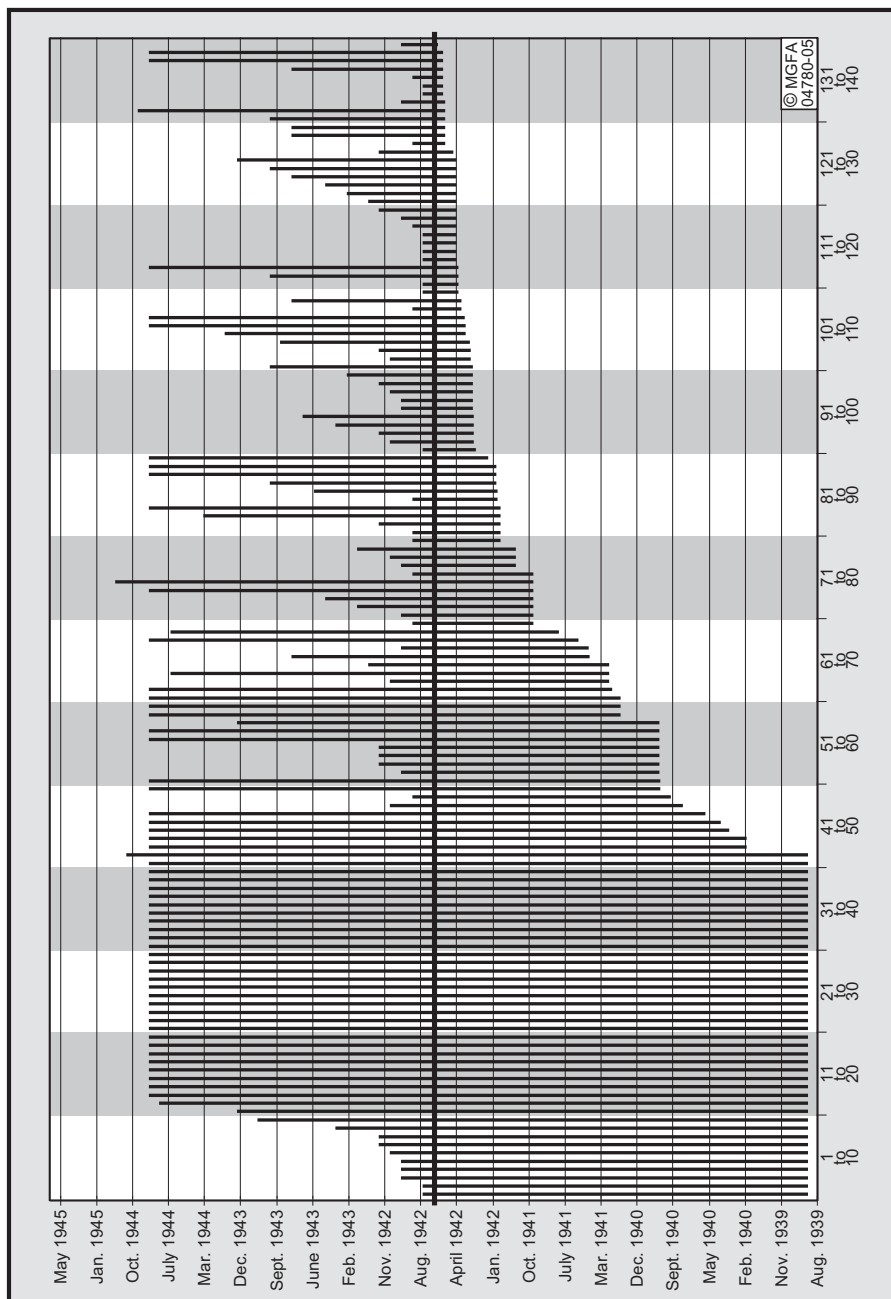
social stratification of those in the company. The ninety service record books of soldiers in the company included in the overall sample however exhibit no significant pattern.<sup>273</sup> The shift in its age structure was similar to that of the division as a whole. The 1910–19 year groups were clearly in the majority, while the proportion of the older years dropped as that of the younger ones rose. The characteristics in the soldiers that promoted continuity and the forming of stable primary groups are—even though in the case of regional origins slightly weakened compared to divisional level—clear to see. In addition, the chart of lengths of stay exhibits a dense overlapping of periods of service that made a lasting breakdown of group identity and cohesion within these groups seem less likely than their being perpetuated through the exchange of group members within the company personnel as this gradually changed.

How deep the inroads into the social structures of primary groups in fact were during times of military crisis is illustrated by a comparison of the company's personnel before and after the crisis in the winter of 1941/2. Diagram II.B.III.7 shows the periods of service of the soldiers who were in the company in the second quarter of 1941 (i.e. before the start of Operation BARBAROSSA); 41 per cent of them had already belonged to the company from its inception, and a further 40 per cent had joined it during the reorganizations in October 1940 as replacements for soldiers who had left it. The successive casualties suffered in the first months of the war against the Soviet Union can be seen, though it is also evident that at least up to the last quarter of 1944 there remained a nucleus of soldiers who had been with the company since the war began. These were bolstered by troops with long lengths of service who were transferred into the company later on. Around this core there was a fluctuating number of men who were with the company for only a short while. Of the 203 soldiers who began Operation BARBAROSSA with the company, 41 had by September 1944 been killed while with the company, 8 were missing, and 111 had—mostly through being wounded—been transferred out. Forty-five men, representing in mid-1944 around 24 per cent of the personnel, were on the company strength from June 1941 to September 1944. Of these 30, that is to say barely 16 per cent, still came from the company's original personnel from August 1939.<sup>274</sup>

This finding is confirmed by a glance at the state the company was in after the winter of 1941/2, shown in Diagram II.B.III.8. In the second quarter of 1942 the company was left with a reduced core group of its old personnel, which was gradually brought up to strength with replacements. Of these soldiers newly integrated into the primary groups a number again achieved long periods of service. These troops, of whom as has already been shown some were still with the company at the end of 1944, became its stabilizing element. The others were however at some earlier time wounded, or killed, or taken prisoner. The nucleus of the company's personnel that developed from this process thus consisted

<sup>273</sup> See Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 196–7.

<sup>274</sup> See Janowitz and Shils, 'Cohesion and Disintegration', 183–4, and Stouffer, *The American Soldier* (1949), 242. In the units of some divisions of the US army there were already only one-third of the original personnel left after only a few months of combat action in Italy.



Source: Deutsche Dienststelle (WaSt), identity tag index of 1 Company, 464th Infantry Regiment, 1939–1945. Y-axis intervals are 100 days, which results in an uneven sequence of months. The chart shows the length of stay (shown by black bars) of soldiers who belonged to the company in the 2nd quarter of 1941.

DIAGRAM II.B.III.8. Lengths of stay of personnel  
from second quarter of 1942 ( $n = 140$ )

of both old and new members of the company, and changed gradually. This primary group, comprising neither only older veterans nor only young replacements, could become the engines of group cohesion and identity at company level. Carrying out a similar analysis quarter by quarter makes it possible to trace in close detail the change in social composition in the course of which the primary groups within the company changed without being destroyed.<sup>275</sup>

In contrast to that in the combat units, the tempo of social change in the division's support formations was a great deal slower. In the signals battalion, for example, analysis of fifty-three of the total sample who belonged to it (against the background of abnormally long lengths of stay in this unit already noted) reveals a very dense and unbroken overlapping of periods of belonging to this segment of the division.<sup>276</sup>

The potential complexity and variation in the pattern of postings of the junior NCOs and privates are also of importance for understanding the changes in social structure. As has already been shown, a large number of factors influenced a soldier's movements through the Wehrmacht. One result was that within a divisional community the rate of social change slowed down as the level in the military hierarchy rose. The smaller the organizational section of an infantry division was, the more rapidly the intermixing of the personnel could occur, even if the soldiers themselves did not leave the divisional community. The main reason for this was the Wehrmacht's allocation policy in the circulation of personnel between the field and replacement armies. While it is true that wounded men were, after recovery, frequently returned to a field unit of their division, the likelihood of coming back to the same company was because of restructurings of personnel within the division less than that of being posted back to the same battalion or regiment. As Diagram II.B.III.9 illustrates, the highest probability was that of remaining within the divisional community itself; as a result, it is at this level that the longest length of stay and closest biographical overlapping can be seen. Individual analyses at the various levels in the structure yield at company level the values mentioned earlier; at battalion level the average for a posting back was already 1.4 and the length of stay 300 days; while at regiment level the posting-back figure rose to 1.8, with the length of stay averaging 345 days. As a consequence of this mechanism the divisional community itself displayed the greatest overlapping of periods of personnel belonging to it.<sup>277</sup> In this macrostructure the social change during the war did, just as at the other levels, occur at a faster rate, though in comparison with them at the slowest.

In parts of the 253rd ID, despite the continuities observed, crises occurred twice during this process—first in the winter of 1941/2, and again at the start of 1945.<sup>278</sup> On both occasions integration of the replacement personnel had

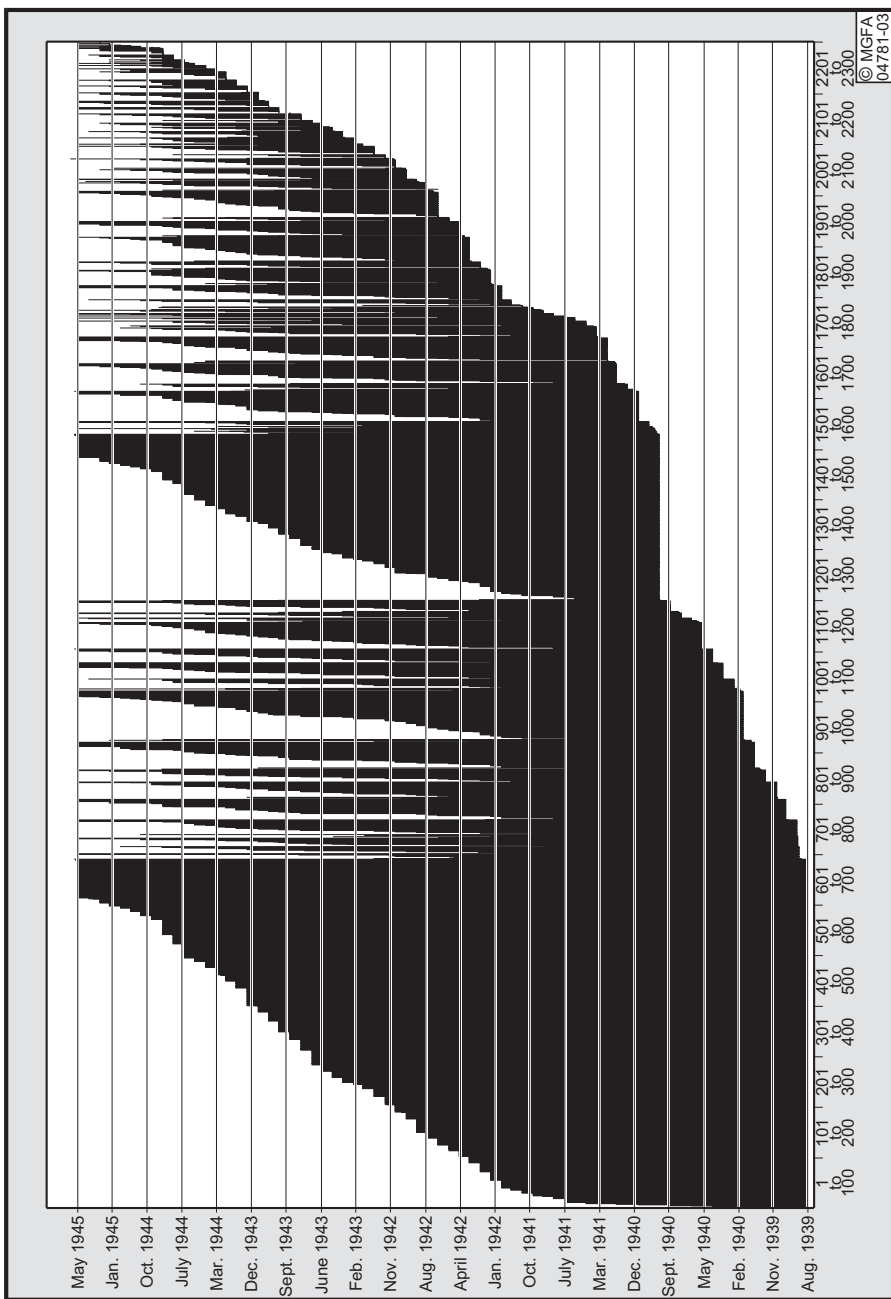
<sup>275</sup> There were of course also patterns and types of company that differed from our example. Further examples can be found in Rass, "Menschenmaterial": Sozialprofil, 196–7.

<sup>276</sup> See *ibid.* 201–2.

<sup>277</sup> On this see Chapter III.5 of this section.

<sup>278</sup> On the typology of the collapse of the primary groups see Janowitz and Shils, 'Cohesion and Disintegration', 179–80, 186–7; Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 104–5; Chodoff, 'Ideology', 575.





*Source:* Data derived from a sample of 2,291 service record books of members of the 253rd ID. Y-axis intervals are 100 days, which results in an uneven sequence of months.

DIAGRAM II.B.III.9. Lengths of stay in divisional community ( $n = 2,291$ )

been less than adequate, and as a result the operational effectiveness of units was noticeably limited. This prompts the question of what features the two situations had in common, and how the cohesion of primary groups was maintained between 1942 and 1945. The winter battle of 1941/2 must have seemed to the soldiers of the 253rd ID like a harbinger of doom. Unlike the war in the west, which had been like a short, triumphal progress, the Soviet winter offensive fell upon the German soldiers after a five-month-long advance that had been marked by bitter fighting and heavy losses.<sup>279</sup> Over this period they had seen their units, most of whose troops had been serving together in the division since 1939, suffer the permanent loss of many of their members. In the 253rd ID, too, some of its companies underwent daunting experiences. In the 473rd Infantry Regiment, for instance, which in March 1942 saw severe action near Rzhev, heavy casualties and a lack of replacement troops sometimes led to crisis episodes ranging from flight even before an enemy attack began by many of the troops still manning the trenches, to the abandoning of all resistance in a state of total apathy.<sup>280</sup> To be fair, the division's commander had in his situation report on 15 March summed up the situation in these words: 'The replacements still have to bed in, and still cannot be used to the full to fight in hard defensive combat.'<sup>281</sup> Already by the next day, however, the actual extent of the breakdown within some units became evident, when during a Soviet attack replacement troops who had just been sent into action panicked, and only a handful of veteran soldiers held on to their positions.<sup>282</sup> Experiences like this during the collapse of Operation BARBAROSSA may have been one reason why the official records as well as contemporary and later personal accounts often express a feeling of absolute dread for one's existence. The casualty figures and the events on the battlefield did basically bear this out, though looking at the actual continuities and breakdowns within the primary groups does relativize these personal and subjective views of the situation. The dramatic way the soldiers saw things can be partly explained by the fact that they had lost comrades—even if only for a certain time when these had been wounded—who had long formed part of their social environment, while objectively part of the group was still intact and many of the friends they had believed lost for ever returned once they had recovered.

Because of the severe casualties and the failing to bond of the replacement personnel, inadequately integrated groups frequently occurred in the eastern army during the winter of 1941/2. Under the stress of combat these could lose their cohesion and capacity for action, while the number of incidents of refusal to follow orders rose exponentially. Although the heavy casualties did often provoke the crisis, the real problem lay less in a lasting break-up of the

<sup>279</sup> See NARA, Foreign Military Study D-078, Schellert, Winter Fighting of the 253rd Infantry Division in the Rzhev Area in 1941/42, I.

<sup>280</sup> BA-MA RH/26 253 25, reports of 21 Mar. and 23 Mar. 1942.

<sup>281</sup> BA-MA RH/26 253 25, situation report of 15 Mar. 1942.

<sup>282</sup> BA-MA RH 26 253 21, entry in 253rd ID's war diary for 16 Mar. 1942.

primary groups than in the inability to stabilize these at a time of an enormously high level of changes in personnel. Both objectively and subjectively the losses meant a structural weakening of the social fabric upon which a military unit's ability to perform depended. Yet with the remaining soldiers from the first primary groups there still existed stable elements that provided the basis for rebuilding social groups. Under these conditions it was the way in which and the circumstances in which the replacement troops were integrated that proved crucial for the structural development of a unit. At the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union the replacement troops were still moved to the field army in large transfer battalions, and there distributed, mostly immediately, to the combat units. After the heavy casualties of the winter of 1941/2, the build-up of personnel strengths again showed a greater degree of continuity, albeit at a very much lower level than before.<sup>283</sup> What was more important, however, was that the system of bringing troops up was fundamentally changed, and from then on matched to the circumstances of the war in the east. One important feature of this was that the replacement and field armies became more closely linked. From 1942 recruits were increasingly trained by soldiers who had already gained front-line experience with the field division and were serving in a training company after, for instance, having been wounded. Moreover the wounded troops who were now again fit for duties in the field and were returning to their units became a more and more important element in the make-up of the replacement personnel. Both groups, the recruits and wounded men after recovery, were from mid-1942 sent up to the field units together in convalescents' transfer companies, or at least to those formations in which convalescent and training units were not physically separated. In this way contacts and bonds could be made between the veterans and the recruits at a far earlier stage than before. Furthermore recruits and veterans, who on average had spent up to a month together during transfer, were often sent up to companies and sections at the front together or in small mixed groups. A further step was taken from 1943 with the use of veterans of the 253rd ID to give premilitary training in Hitler Youth military training camps, and of highly decorated officers and men on recruiting drives for young volunteers.<sup>284</sup> These measures both intensified the contact between the first and second generations of soldiers, and brought it still further forward in time.<sup>285</sup> Among the field units, too, there was a different system for integrating replacement troops. The field replacement battalion moved, from having been used for transfer, to becoming a training institution in the division's rear area, which on the one hand served as a rest and recuperation area for the lightly wounded, where on the other the recruits could be trained at the same time as they were being

<sup>283</sup> See Chapter III.2 of this section.

<sup>284</sup> IR 473, battle report of 25 Oct. 1942, BA-MA RH/26 253 32; BA-ZNS, PA 44504. See Bönninghausen, 253. ID, 17; Alman in *Einzelkämpfer*, 219–37; Williamson, *Infantry Aces*, 76–7; Kurowski, *Grenadiere*, 202–18.

<sup>285</sup> NARA, T-314, Film 687, Frame 492.

absorbed into the divisional community. Besides this there was, independent from mid-1943 until January 1944 and later attached to the field replacement battalion, a division battle school where the soldiers could be trained in small groups and cohesion in the units thus strengthened.<sup>286</sup>

After the winter of 1941/2 and right up to 1945 there was no sign of any comparable structural crisis in the 253rd ID. Both the total collapse of combat units and refusal to act by individuals remained confined to a relatively few instances.<sup>287</sup> Isolated situations arose between 1942 and 1944 that do however show that the loss of group cohesion and a unit failing in a combat situation has to be attributed not only to poor equipment, inadequate training, numerical and material inferiority, faulty leadership, and an excess of mental and physical stress, but occurred most of all in situations where the mechanisms of social integration had broken down.<sup>288</sup> It was not until the sundering of the link between field and replacement units at the end of 1944, and the ever-fiercer military pressure, that the social structure began early in 1945 to fall apart once again—and this time for good. One important factor in this was, as it had been in 1941/2, the breakdown of the circulation of personnel. Whereas convalescent transfer companies had arrived regularly up to the end of 1944, replacement personnel for the division in 1945 consisted of a disparate mix of soldiers who had previously belonged to a large number of units outside the division, and—unlike those who had come from outside units as replacements in the past—could no longer be successfully merged into the division.<sup>289</sup>

The weakening of primary-group cohesion in units of the 253rd ID was thus neither something that existed from the winter of 1941/2 for the rest of the war, nor solely the result of high casualty figures. It was rather more a matter of a disruption of social structures in certain sets of crisis circumstances, though it did not develop into a latently ever-present problem—it triggered instead adaptation processes that cushioned its effects. The Wehrmacht modified the pattern of personnel circulation, and gradually a changeover of generations took place within the primary groups. Lasting breakdowns of group continuity were the exception rather than the rule. The evident disruption of the social fabric during the Wehrmacht's first major setback in the east thus led not to a definitive destruction of group cohesion but rather to a change in the mechanisms through which social relationships between the troops, and the resultant cohesion crucial for military effectiveness, developed.

An interesting contrast to this development in field units is seen when we consider the replacement units and how they were mobilized for action in late

<sup>286</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frame 784; NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frame 931; NARA, T-315, Film 1760, Frames 398–9, 424–5, 564–5, 566–7, 673–4, 805–6, 811–12. See Janowitz and Shils, 'Cohesion and Disintegration', 207–8.

<sup>287</sup> See Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 169–92.

<sup>288</sup> NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frames 328–9; NARA, T-315, Film 1759, Frame 381.

<sup>289</sup> See NARA, Foreign Military Study P-149/48, Viehmann, 'Nachtangriff mit einer geschwächten, ungeübten Truppe', 3–4, 16; German Red Cross tracing service, returnees index for 253rd ID.

1944. The 253rd replacement regiment was made ready for combat and thrown into the fighting south-west of Aachen in September 1944. A large number of soldiers had already deserted from the division's earlier replacement units during the first engagements in September, and this sparked off a wave of serious disciplinary problems in the battalions that continued right through to the end of the war, and to which the military courts responded with increasing brutality and harsh repressive countermeasures. Although the units in question comprised for the most part men who had recovered from earlier wounds and were battle-hardened, had already been in action of the eastern front, and were far from being a final collection of inexperienced recruits, whole companies crumbled within a few hours.<sup>290</sup> The two sides of this situation can be seen from the fact that the soldiers who came up to the remaining units of the division with the last of the transfer companies to leave the 253rd infantry replacement regiment between September 1944 and January 1945 were looked on as the last reliable replacement personnel for the division's units on the eastern front. At the same time it was proving impossible, from the recruits and convalescents remaining in the replacement units, to form units of any combat capability worth mentioning, even by imposing the harshest discipline—even at the end of the war, in our case, more men were executed in the replacement units than in the field units.<sup>291</sup> This underlines the importance of the social and functional structures existing in the field units for maintaining primary-group cohesion and military effectiveness. As the example of the mobilized replacement units shows, fighting ability could not be ensured by harsh discipline alone if the necessary secure footing of a social structure within the units was lacking. What was needed for this social foundation was still present in the majority of the Wehrmacht's large formations up to the summer of 1944. Together with the institutional mechanisms of command—the principle of orders being obeyed, ensured by a combination of both positive<sup>292</sup> and negative<sup>293</sup> sanctions and indoctrination—the social components (that is to say the social bonds between individuals within small groups of the military) contributed to the functional capabilities of wide sections of the Wehrmacht up to the final stage of the war, since the conditions needed for the creation of primary groups were present for a remarkably long time.

<sup>290</sup> DDSt, casualty records GEB 464; BA-ZNS, RH/526 G. See Christoffel, *Krieg am Westwall*; Trees, *Schlachtfeld*.

<sup>291</sup> See Rush, 'A Different Perspective', 481–2, 497–8; id., 'German Organizations in the Hürtgen Forest', 66–7.

<sup>292</sup> See Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 237–76.

<sup>293</sup> See Jürgen Förster in the present volume.

## IV. Results

QUANTITATIVE studies of the structures of social change in the formations of the Wehrmacht during the Second World War are, especially where the NCOs and other ranks are concerned, a line of research that is still in its infancy. They can draw on a broad spectrum of documents relating to individuals, held in massive numbers in places like the German federal archive (*Bundesarchiv*), the German military service records office (*Deutsche Dienststelle*), and the German Red Cross archives. These sources are, with computer-based searching, becoming ever more readily accessible, and can make a valuable contribution to the study of recent German history.

The first stage is to examine, at the level of both large military formations and the individual, the structures and the mechanism of social and institutional change. This gives a clearer idea of the actual nature of the Wehrmacht, and a sharper picture of the complex processes that went on from the creation right through to the final downfall of this gigantic military machine. By looking at the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, the already differentiated picture of its officer corps can be supplemented by analysis of the social profile of other segments of this military society. In a second stage, the knowledge gained of the social composition of the Wehrmacht and of the dynamic of social change at various levels within it provides both a starting point for studying power structures and patterns of behaviour, and the basis for analysing attitudes and mentalities in various sections of the Wehrmacht personnel.<sup>1</sup>

Defining periods in the social development within formations of the Wehrmacht can be guided by a number of turning-point milestones in the history of the Second World War, and by the development in the rate of military casualties. Here—with all the necessary caveats as to specific developments in individual instances—a separation was made into a build-up phase from August 1939 to June 1941, an adaptation period between mid-1941 and mid-1944, and the break-up of social and institutional structures between the summer of 1944 and the war's end. Especially in the important middle phase the greatest number ever of large infantry formations existed in a relatively stable form, while social change in their structures took place at individual level.

The study of the 253rd Infantry Division taken as our example (the only Wehrmacht formation to be analysed thus far in this way) has, in the attempt to demonstrate the social profile of infantry units by drawing on a large number of individual cases, thrown up a wide range of different results.

The division itself was, where its organizational and operational history are concerned, a typical large Wehrmacht formation. It was in being for the whole of the war, fought first in the campaign in the west, was then from 1941 to

<sup>1</sup> On this see Kilian, Zagovec, and Müller in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

1945 engaged in the eastern theatre of operations, and in respect of intensity of action and experience of the war exhibited features that were common to the majority of infantry divisions. All the more surprising, therefore, are a number of the study's results that run counter to the prevailing view held by researchers. The quantitative development of the 253rd ID's personnel strength differed widely from what had been supposed. The number of soldiers who belonged to the division between 1939 and 1945 was substantially smaller than has been assumed for infantry divisions. The difference between the highest available estimate of 50,000 troops and the results arrived at here which suggest around 27,000 members of the division comes close to 50 per cent.

The deciding factors in the change in the division's social make-up were the military casualties and the replacement personnel. Quantitative and qualitative analysis showed permanent losses to have been only 30 per cent, while 70 per cent of the casualties involved woundings. It is especially the high proportion of wounded men who subsequently rejoined their old field units that explains the actually far lower number of individuals needed to make up the personnel strength of an infantry division. Furthermore, a decisive feature in the replacement of personnel was the fact that the majority of replacement troops supplied to the field units came from within the divisional community of the 253rd ID itself, and that the basic functions needed for the development of the social composition remained up to early 1945—that is to say past the general watershed in the middle of 1944—to a large degree intact.

The detailed analysis of the social make-up is determined most of all by two circumstances: for the social profile of a large formation we have, with regard to the age structure and regional and social origins, to assume both a relatively high degree of homogeneity among the personnel and that these structures would not wholly break down in the course of the war. To this extent the Wehrmacht's personnel allocation policy, which aimed at manning its units with soldiers having a similar socio-cultural background and in particular coming from the same region, as the basis for their cohesion and effectiveness, could in fact be put into effect and maintained as the war went on. The stability achieved in this way had however not to rely wholly on individuals but rather to come about through a predominant socio-economic and demographic profile common to the great majority of the soldiers.

The early bonding of future soldiers to the regime made clear the strong influence of National Socialist organizations in their socialization process. The extent to which certain age groups were conditioned for their future as soldiers in the Wehrmacht was revealed by the degree to which they were involved in the RAD, Wehrmacht, and NS organizations. On average, three-quarters of the year groups that dominate the age pyramid of the groups being studied had already belonged to such institutions before the war. The troops of the 253rd ID were thus already, through their pre-war experience and socialization in the Third Reich, prepared for service in a totalitarian institution and had, well beyond the circle of active Nazis, been moulded by the educational



arms of the National Socialist state. A qualitative study of the social structures in the division's units filled out the quantitative findings. At the level of the divisional community as a whole, the pattern of the soldiers' movements was typified by long spells in its sub-units. There were however variations to this in the various branches, since the division's field units showed a hierarchy of social and physical environments offering varying degrees of safety and stability. The greatest instability was among the combat troops, while the most continuity was seen among the units providing support services. In parallel with these structures, the average age increased from the infantry units to the rear-area services. On the one hand, therefore, there was in the various segments of the division a large measure of generation-based homogeneity; on the other, however, those in the younger age groups were exposed to very much higher risks than the older soldiers.

The change of perspective to the level of the ordinary soldiers has made it possible to trace the outlines of a collective soldier's biography in which we can see the effect that the manifold events in the life of a member of the Wehrmacht on his journey through the Wehrmacht and the war had on him, and the rhythm of life that resulted. Discovering the typical paths taken has revealed how complex the reality of life in the Wehrmacht was, and what uncertainties, dangers, and terrors marked a soldier's life while at the same time becoming part of everyday existence.

The officers in the lower grades were recruited, from the denominational, social, and political viewpoint, from the Third Reich's 'officer material' strata of the population, and their biographies are largely typical. Two findings highlight their role in the division's command set-up: first, the line officers formed the fastest-changing element in the 253rd ID's social structure, which meant that they could not be a stabilizing component. And secondly, their training, political dedication to the system, and their mindset towards the patterns of behaviour and leadership principles of an officer corps re-formed in the Nazi mould made them virtually interchangeable elements, to be either as it were 'used up' through death or become qualified to take on higher command tasks. As military leaders at the subaltern level they no doubt were of far less individual than functional importance.

Seen in this light, the NCO corps take on considerable importance. Highly skilled militarily, and embedded in the Nazi leadership model, they became a crucial link between the leaders and the led. Their social profile made it possible for them to occupy a position midway between the other two groups, and made possible a closeness to both those segments of military society. The pattern of postings and movement of the NCOs within the military system made them the segment of the division's personnel exhibiting the greatest continuity; as a rule, non-commissioned officers stayed with the 253rd ID longer than either the rank-and-file soldiers or the line officers.

Analysis of the structure of primary groups within the 253rd ID leads to the conclusion that these continued to exist right up to the final stage of the war;

it was not until the breakdown in the replacement of personnel late in 1944 that there ceased to be a continuous development. Conceiving of a primary group as a static body of particular individuals proved here to be simplistic, and one needed rather to think in terms of permanent change in social groups and the constant emerging of new social networks. Besides living together in their units and institutional set-ups, the learning early on in their military socialization how to form groups inside military systems, and the soldiers having a shared socio-cultural background, provided a basis for this process. It helped here that from the viewpoint of the soldiers remaining at any given time in the structures of the division, there was the support of a social milieu they had trust in. The existence of a stable 'we-group' can thus be interpreted as a precondition for the readiness of soldiers to take part in the Wehrmacht's increasingly harsher way of waging war, and the brutalization of the soldiers themselves that can be seen to have happened in parallel with this.<sup>2</sup> Combined with the institutional system of command, which could ensure the subordination of the soldiers to the institution's instructions on what to do, these structures, which until shortly before the war's end made possible a stabilizing corset of social relationships, formed a basis for the functioning of many Wehrmacht units as military formations and as the carriers-out of all aspects of the German conduct of war.

<sup>2</sup> On this see Rass, '“Menschenmaterial”: Sozialprofil', 269–70, 344–5, 375–6, 384–5; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 1197–25; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 38–9.

# C. Military Resistance Activities and the War

WINFRIED HEINEMANN

## I. Resistance in German War Society

### I. FORMS OF RESISTANCE

THE National Socialist regime was not primarily the product of a fiendishly cunning policy devised by Hitler. It arose in at least equal measure from a fundamental aberration on the part of large sections of German society, which welcomed the National Socialist movement before and after 1933, and helped it to gain power.<sup>1</sup> The National Socialist German Workers' Party, or NSDAP, was one of a number of political players before 1933, and its readiness to use force was widely admired and imitated in other parties. On the other hand, right-wingers blamed it for 'reverting to parliamentary procedure' in the later phases of the Weimar Republic.<sup>2</sup> So the radical change in the method of settling political scores in February and March 1933 caught many of its political opponents by surprise. As a result, disenchantment with National Socialist rule was slow to develop from political opposition into full-blown resistance and a determination to overthrow the regime by force.

The term 'resistance' requires some explanation and definition in this context, especially as it was quickly taken up and given a positive gloss by politicians and the general public in the Federal Republic of Germany, and was a valuable weapon in the political armoury.<sup>3</sup> For present purposes, resistance is to be understood as meaning efforts directed essentially against the perpetuation of the iniquitous Nazi regime, and against the prosecution of the war started by that regime. This definition eschews the broader use of the term, according to which almost any nonconformist behaviour is regarded as resistance, at least when it carried a risk of prosecution and punishment by the regime.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen, 'Das Scheitern'; *Germany and the Second World War*, i (chapters by Wette).

<sup>2</sup> Mommsen, 'Regierung ohne Parteien', 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Die geteilte Vergangenheit; Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus*; Steinbach, *Widerstand im Widerstreit*.

<sup>4</sup> See Hans-Adolf Jacobsen's introduction to *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*. For a different and broader recent account, citing historians from Rothfels to Broszat, see Wentker, 'Widerstand gegen Hitler', 4; see also Kershaw, 'Widerstand ohne Volk?', 781, or Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 66-7.

The understanding of resistance on which the following observations are based concentrates on movements that aimed to overthrow the entire Nazi regime, to prevent the outbreak of war, or—after 1939—to end the war.

Resistance in Nazi Germany grew out of the political struggles of the Weimar Republic. It is therefore no surprise that the traditional opponents of National Socialism were the first to take action against the new regime after it seized power. This was particularly true of resistance on the part of workers, both Social Democrat and Communist, though they rarely joined forces against the regime, even under the pressure of Nazi oppression and persecution.<sup>5</sup> The one thing they had in common was that both were very quickly infiltrated by the Gestapo, and eliminated as politically relevant forces. By the time war broke out in 1939, Social Democrat and Communist resistance was reduced to cultivating old friends and carefully keeping up contacts. The regime continued for some time to overestimate the readiness and ability of the Communists, in particular, to put up a fight. In fact working-class resistance did not pose any serious threat to the Nazi regime during the war.<sup>6</sup>

Middle-class resistance was initially muted, because the aims of many members of that class coincided to some extent with elements of National Socialist policy. They were largely united in their desire for a review of the Versailles treaty system, and in their antipathy to Bolshevism. This also applied very largely to the principal churches, which were still in the strongest position to resist ideological penetration.<sup>7</sup> Church opposition initially focused on the totalitarian ambitions of the state, which were potentially inimical to a preoccupation with higher values; but this disapproval did not imply any wish to challenge the fundamental legitimacy of the regime. The first concern of the Church was not to overthrow the Nazi regime, which was regarded as the embodiment of 'authority', but to preserve its own structures, its own set of values, and later, increasingly, to identify and name specific instances of wrongdoing.<sup>8</sup>

In conservative circles too, there was some early—albeit isolated—criticism of the National Socialist seizure of power. Although they might see eye to eye with the regime on many political issues, some conservatives considered the new rulers too 'plebeian'. The Horst Wessel song was, after all, a call to arms against both 'red front' and 'reaction'. Arch-conservatives like the landowners Ewald Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin and Carl Hans Graf von Hardenberg were against the regime from the start, probably because they had a good nose for the revolutionary pressure for social change that was an essential element of National Socialism.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Duhnke, *Die KPD*; Peukert, *Die KPD*; Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg*; Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät?', 265–8; for a new overview, see Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 28–41, and Mehringer, 'Sozialistischer Widerstand', 42–54, with bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> Mommsen, *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Buchstab, Kaff, and Kleinmann, *Verfolgung und Widerstand*; Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*; Klausener, *Zum Widerstand der Katholiken*; *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, iii.

<sup>8</sup> Norden, 'Widersetzlichkeit', 78.

<sup>9</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 36–7; Klaus, 'Politischer Konservatismus', 222, 228; Hardenberg, *Auf immer neuen Wegen*, 33, 61–3.

The military shared the middle-class and conservative values and outlook to some extent, but they were initially inclined to identify with the aims of the new rulers on professional grounds. However, this general agreement with the new regime masked disagreement on particular issues. There is evidence that many who were later involved in the conspiracy, notably Gen. Ludwig Beck, warmly welcomed Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, hoping for rearmament, a review of the Versailles treaty, and greater respect for their professional standing.<sup>10</sup> Of course, there was rather more than an 'apparent identity'<sup>11</sup> of aims—the Reichswehr high command was by no means that blind—but the identity was partial. There might be a measure of agreement with some of the regime's aims but others, indeed an increasing proportion, raised doubts about the new rulers,<sup>12</sup> so that here, too, a certain disillusionment rapidly set in.

For the purposes of considering resistance during the war—above all the interaction between resistance and the course of the war—most of the events that occurred between 1933 and 1939 must be regarded as a prelude. Nevertheless, they cannot be left out of the picture altogether, because some of the individuals and groups that were later to form the nucleus of the conspiracy against the regime first met during that time. Also, issues were already arising that were later, in a more acute form, to provide the central motives for resistance during the war. One of the most important was the role of the army high command in the overall structure of the National Socialist system, in its capacity as central advisory body on questions of war and peace. Another was Hitler's determination to go to war regardless of the long-term implications for a successful foreign policy. These questions will have to be considered when we come to examine the foreign policy objectives of the national-conservative resistance, and the plans to replace the upper echelons of the armed forces and of the state as a whole. The crimes perpetrated by the regime were an issue even at this early stage, although those who were later to join the resistance did not all recognize these iniquities as such in 1934 or 1938.

No examination of German war society would be complete without a mention of the—gradually unfolding—opposition to the regime. It is quite clear from the constant efforts to complete the ideological penetration of military and civil society, and the extreme criminal prosecution of almost any form of deviant conduct, that the regime felt increasingly threatened by opposition forces as time went by. Surprisingly, the various working-class groups were long thought to present a greater threat in this connection than the conservative middle classes, even during the war. But working-class resistance had already, long before the war, lost the central organization that might have enabled it to pose a serious threat to the Third Reich once the war had started.

<sup>10</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 24.

<sup>11</sup> See Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 442.

<sup>12</sup> Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung', 424; see also Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 20.

The present analysis concentrates on the interaction between resistance and the events that occurred during the war, and therefore examines working-class resistance only in so far as the crucially important national-conservative resistance movements maintained contacts with workers' leaders.

Church resistance consisted primarily of preventing National Socialist interference in the work of the Church, in the strict sense of the term. The state authorities' right to wage war was not questioned as such. Any attack on the Church's moral authority, on the other hand, led to an official church warning, the three sermons of the Catholic bishop of Münster, Clemens August Graf von Galen, being probably best known as conspicuous examples of the way protest was confined to church matters.<sup>13</sup> The events surrounding the bishop of Münster also reveal something else, namely that during the war the Nazi regime did not feel strong enough to enter into open conflict with the conservative forces of the Church. On the contrary, the general intention was to defer the settlement of this particular argument until, it was hoped, the war had been brought to a successful conclusion. The outside threat forced the regime to concentrate first on reaching an accommodation with its national-conservative opponents at home.<sup>14</sup>

A considerable number of low- or middle-ranking members of the hierarchy of both the major denominations, and of many smaller religious groups, were subjected to persecution ranging from shorter or longer terms of imprisonment to trial and execution. This applied particularly to priests or pastors who spoke openly in the pulpit against the regime, its war policy, or its crimes. The names of the Protestant pastor Martin Niemöller and the Catholic priest Bernhard Lichtenberg spring to mind.

In addition to those who were persecuted for the exercise of their pastoral duties, there were also in retrospect some remarkable instances of people who stood up against the regime from a sense of Christian responsibility, the religious aspect being more or less prominent in each case. The 'White Rose', the group of professors and students at the University of Munich who were arrested and summarily executed in February 1943 for spreading anti-war propaganda, was markedly Christian in character—despite individual differences in motivation. This group shows how difficult it is to draw any clear line: its resistance was strongly influenced by members' experience of the war, but was also directed against domestic manifestations of Nazi rule such as the cult of personality or the image of women. At the same time, it had something in common with military resistance in the broadest sense of the term. At any

<sup>13</sup> Galen, *Akten, Briefe und Predigten*; Kuropka, *Clemens August Graf von Galen*; Morsey, 'Clemens August Kardinal von Galen'.

<sup>14</sup> The argument about Pope Pius XII and his attitude to the Holocaust will not be considered here because it is not directly relevant to the German war society; there is consequently no need to address the issues raised by Goldhagen in *A Moral Reckoning*, his work on the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust.

rate, some members of the group had been called up in the summer of 1942 and were officially still members of the armed forces, although ostensibly on leave to study medicine.<sup>15</sup>

The 'White Rose' group operated largely in isolation and had no contact with other resistance groups, but the 'Kreisau circle' was much closer to the conspiracy of 20 July 1944, not least because a number of figures were involved in both.<sup>16</sup> However, while the 20 July conspiracy was bent on a coup and a change of government, the Kreisau circle saw that it was essential for the National Socialist regime to dig its own grave. Most members of the circle were against a premature coup because—like most political thinkers—they were still deeply affected by the end of the First World War, only twenty-five years earlier, and they feared that a revolutionary government would bear the taint of treachery. This caused the group, dubbed the 'counts' circle' by the Gestapo on account of the predominantly noble lineage of its members, to concentrate even more on planning for a new Germany after the defeat that they regarded as inevitable. The Kreisau circle is also synonymous with inter-denominational Christian resistance, although it received no official support from either Church. However, it is a remarkable example of outstanding Christian and social, even socialist, high-mindedness, combined with traditional aristocratic pride.

Just as no account of society as a whole would be complete without an examination of the various forms of resistance, so too any analysis of the 'uniformed society' requires an examination of manifestations of opposition in that section of society. For this purpose it will be essential, first, to draw a clear distinction between ideas about an alternative that conformed with the system and resistance that posed a threat to the system; and, second, to show—soberly and without the emotion that tends to preclude any critical questions about the resistance on principle—how the one led to the other, and how military resistance in the Second World War was characterized by a conceptual and personal proximity, often even at different times, between the policy of seeking an alternative and the effort to bring about a coup.

The continuum of highly varied forms of resistance must not distract attention from the fact that, under the conditions of the war society and the extensive surveillance of all aspects of life, there was not one united resistance movement but a number of highly disparate groups with partly conflicting values and aims. One of these groups was the national-conservative resistance, which posed a threat to the regime precisely because it 'grew out of cooperation with the leadership of the National Socialist movement'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Schüler, 'Im Geiste der Gemordeten'; Steffahn, *Die Weiße Rose*.

<sup>16</sup> Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler*, is the classic work on the subject; for more recent studies, see also Kessel, *Verborgene Saat*, and Trott zu Solz, *Hans Peters und der Kreisauer Kreis*.

<sup>17</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 27; see also Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 4; Günther Gillissen, 'Niemand muß an diesen Männern zweifeln: Zur Widerstands-Ausstellung', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 25 Jan. 1998, 3.



## 2. WAR AS A DETERMINING FACTOR FOR NATIONAL-CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE

None of the many groups of the pre-war years posed a serious threat to the Nazi regime or its military capability, although Georg Elser almost succeeded in his attempt on Hitler's life.<sup>18</sup> Whether the regime would have been able to cope with the shock of the Führer's death at that point and find a successor within its own ranks, or whether it would have fallen prey to internecine feuding, must remain an open question. By the time war broke out, a coup could only have been organized from within, that is from the ranks of the traditional or the new elite.<sup>19</sup> The term 'national-conservative' is not used in any derogatory sense but simply to reflect the fact that any resistance that might pose a threat to the system could now be expected only from the upper classes, the nobility, senior civil servants, and the officer corps. They belonged to the section of society for whom the end of the Weimar Republic, which they despised as the 'age of the system', was synonymous with the failure of parliamentary democracy. Many traced this failure to the fact that the Weimar Republic had led directly to National Socialism. For many national-conservatives, the rise of the masses and mob rule, which was to be one of the motives for resistance, was simply a continuation and conclusion of the processes that had started in the 1920s.

These were not, however, the only reasons why opposition to the Nazi regime shifted from the supporters of the Weimar Republic to senior civil servants, a few senior trade-union officials, and above all the middle ranks of the officer corps. Under the conditions of the war society, other groups were no longer in a position to mount any effective resistance against the regime. The examination of resistance during the war will therefore, of necessity, concentrate mainly on these national-conservative groups, and, in particular, on the way in which the war, the course of the war, and life in the war society influenced both the decision to resist and the conspirators' modus operandi.

The transition of national-conservative resistance to war mode was not entirely smooth. Unsurprisingly, there were no major plans for a coup after Hitler appeared to have proved his genius as a field commander in a series of rapid victories—and before it was more widely realized that he was a complete amateur in military matters. In any case, patriotic members of the opposition felt obliged to consider 'whether the war did not preclude the actions they proposed to take, as Germany's enemies would draw no fine distinction between the regime and the people'.<sup>20</sup> The question of how the enemy would deal with an incoming alternative German government after the fall of Hitler was a

<sup>18</sup> Kershaw, 'Widerstand ohne Volk?', 793. On Elser, see Ortner, *Der einsame Attentäter*.

<sup>19</sup> Weinberg, *A World at arms*, 480; *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, Introduction, p. xxiv.

<sup>20</sup> Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 60.

constant thread in all resistance thinking. At the same time, the war itself was becoming an incentive. The longer it lasted and the clearer it became that it would end in disaster, the greater was the pressure on national-conservative circles to act.

Strangely enough, earlier studies of the national-conservative resistance often pass over the actual events of the war. Biographies of the leading figures are informative about their subjects' military, philosophical, literary, and social backgrounds. They describe the sense of moral outrage at the crimes committed by Germans in the course of the war, and claim that that was the primary motive for the decision to resist.<sup>21</sup> But it is frequently not clear how far these moral considerations were supplemented, or even eclipsed, by military or technical motives arising from an officer's or a diplomat's professional activity.<sup>22</sup>

Henning von Tresckow and Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, on the military side, and Carl Friedrich Goerdeler and Ludwig Beck, on the civil side, succeeded in creating an organization to mount a coup d'état in the middle of the war, an organization that remained undiscovered until the actual attempt took place—and this in an army that had sworn an oath of loyalty to Hitler in person, and that had been engaged since 1943/4 in a desperate battle on all fronts against superior forces. What arguments did the conspirators deploy to broaden their base, and win recruits to the cause? How could discovery be prevented if an officer was invited to join the conspiracy but declined to do so?

And if the conspirators knew that Germany could not now win the war, what scenarios did they have in mind for ending the war, as they planned their action? This applies not only to contact with the enemy with a view to ending the fighting on all fronts, particularly in the west, as quickly as possible, but also to the future internal structure of Germany. Opinion as to whether to continue the war in the east was deeply divided, depending very much on the degree of realism the person concerned brought to the task of assessing the military prospects. As the Nazi regime became increasingly unpopular, national-conservative circles were forced to recognize that the possibility of a change of regime would have to be considered at the end of the war if not sooner. So, how far was the attempted coup of 20 July 1944 also the climax and turning point in a long-standing conflict between the Nazi regime and the conservative elite of the old Reich?

All the protagonists remembered the chaos in Germany after the First World War, and were determined that the same thing must not be allowed to happen again this time, although it was already clear that the Soviet Union

<sup>21</sup> See Scheurig, *Henning von Tresckow*; Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, or the passages on Beck in Hoffmann, *Widerstand*; on Beck, see the contradictory accounts by Hoffmann in 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken', and Müller in *General Ludwig Beck*; Müller, 'Militärpolitik'.

<sup>22</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 3.

would have more say in Germany's future political structure than it had had in 1918/19. Many military considerations were marked by a dread of conflict within Germany. Even among members of the resistance, there was a constant concern to avoid another 'November 1918'. However, that did not necessarily mean that 'conservatives, nationalists, and National Socialists had the same interests'.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, according to the head of the army judiciary Karl Sack, himself a conspirator, the band 'must at all costs maintain its unity and its strength, to avoid a vacuum after the National Socialist regime had been removed, and to ensure that peace could be negotiated on reasonable terms'.<sup>24</sup>

It is time to take another look at the military organization of the coup d'état. Here was an action, planned by highly qualified general staff officers, which failed. The question is whether it failed as a result of poor planning or of external factors beyond their control, which rendered success unlikely from the outset.<sup>25</sup>

The history of the resistance against National Socialism, both before 1939 and during the war, has already been fully researched.<sup>26</sup> New sources are unlikely to emerge now, although odd items of previously unknown information do, surprisingly, crop up from time to time.<sup>27</sup> The principal known sources are in the public domain and have been interpreted over and over again.<sup>28</sup> The specific problem with regard to the national-conservative resistance, in so far as it took the form of a conspiracy, is that any account relies very largely on the testimony of the few survivors, and on records of the Gestapo investigations and other—system-compliant—documentary evidence. It is misleading, in this connection, to regard the accounts by Gestapo chief Ernst Kaltenbrunner as 'official reports'.<sup>29</sup> They represent what members of the resistance said, often under torture and in fear of their lives, seen through the distorting mirror of the recording officers' ideology and the institutional interests of the Gestapo. The conspirators themselves left no records. Historians who rely exclusively on archive material consequently run the risk of unwittingly taking sides with the Nazi regime that produced it.<sup>30</sup> Accounts that rely primarily on records

<sup>23</sup> Garbe, 'Von "Furchtbaren Juristen"', 52.

<sup>24</sup> Haase, 'Generalstabsrichter Karl Sack', 205.

<sup>25</sup> Schmidt-Hackenberg claims in *20. Juli 1944* that Stauffenberg deliberately allowed the attempt to fail in order to forestall the myth that Hitler had been betrayed. This aberrant view will not be considered in detail here. It is almost inconceivable that Stauffenberg, who was the leading figure in the conspiracy and who had long been resolved to go to any lengths, should have abandoned his plans on the basis of a single conversation on the plane with Hellmuth Stieff. Schmidt-Hackenberg also overlooks the role of Werner von Haefens, who was with Stauffenberg throughout the day.

<sup>26</sup> *Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler: Wahrnehmung und Wertung; Der 20. Juli 1944.*

<sup>27</sup> Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen'; also, earlier, Hoffmann, 'Tresckow und Stauffenberg'.

<sup>28</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*; Hassell, *Die Hassell-Tagebücher*; and Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, which contains many valuable references.

<sup>29</sup> See Hamerow, *Road to the Wolf's Lair*, 224–5.

<sup>30</sup> Günther Gillesen, 'Den entscheidenden Wurf wagen: Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Widerstandskämpfers Henning von Tresckow', in *FAZ*, 6 Jan. 2001; see also Heinemann, 'Widerstand', 49.

without placing them in context give the wrong impression. However many reservations one may have about statements made after the war by those involved in these events, what they have to say cannot simply be dismissed without further ado.

The attempted coup failed. But that does not mean that there were no repercussions.

The events of 20 July 1944 changed the Third Reich, and a study of the interaction between resistance and war must include an account of these changes. It must also consider how the Nazi hierarchy reacted to the shock of 20 July, and exploited it to achieve long-term ideological aims. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the specific features of resistance activity under wartime conditions. In so far as it builds on existing knowledge, the central question of the interaction between the events of the war and the attempted coup d'état may also shed new light. Lastly, an attempt will be made to place national-conservative resistance, in its various forms, in the general context of the armed forces' relations with National Socialism in the age of world wars.

## II. The Military Conspiracy: Military Motives for Resistance

### I. THE COMMAND STRUCTURE

#### (a) 1933 to 1938

In military circles, an important and recurring motive for the decision to resist was the demand for change at the top of the military high command. During the war, this primarily technical concept was in fact a cover for some hard thinking on the crucial subject of Hitler relinquishing supreme command of the Wehrmacht, or after 1942 at least of the army.

The idea that the structure at the top of the Reich high command was inadequate had already been canvassed in the early days of the National Socialist regime, and it was, indirectly at least, one of the reasons for moves to overthrow the government even before the war. One consequence of the failure of the Weimar Republic was the decision by the aged president, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, to appoint Hitler as chancellor, the very man he had only recently dismissed as a 'Bohemian corporal'. Strangely enough, Hitler's government was the first to command a parliamentary majority after a period of rule by a series of presidential cabinets. It represented a last attempt, ostensibly within the framework of the Weimar constitution, to find a solution to the permanent national crisis, and save the Reich from internal collapse. Hindenburg was only too well aware that the Reichswehr high command had considered the problem of internal unrest, and was prepared to assume executive powers if necessary.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Reichswehr high command had certainly not contemplated taking military action against Hitler's appointment, even though some conservatives found the National Socialist movement repugnant from the very beginning. Any move against the highly respected Hindenburg was unthinkable, and there was no guarantee—especially since the Ulm Reichswehr trial—that the troops would obey orders if such a move were to be made.<sup>2</sup> In any case, further consideration of the matter was pre-empted by new appointments to leading positions in the military hierarchy. Werner von Blomberg became Reich minister of defence, Freiherr Werner von Fritsch commander-in-chief of the army, Beck chief of the general staff, and Walter Reichenau head of the Wehrmacht office.

<sup>1</sup> Pyta, 'Vorbereitungen'.

<sup>2</sup> On the question of military intervention in the spring of 1933, see Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 42–3; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 67; Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 114.

It is true that Hitler appeared to be moving towards an accommodation with the military and with middle-class conservative elements in the summer of 1934, when he broke up the SA, military rival of the Reichswehr. However, two generals, including former Reich minister of war and chancellor Kurt von Schleicher, were among those who lost their lives in the aftermath of the alleged 'Röhm putsch'. It was certainly no accident that the two officers in question had been in charge of planning for a possible military putsch in 1932.<sup>3</sup> The lesson for the Reichswehr was clear: a similar purge of the military high command could not be ruled out. Had Beck already been considering a military coup d'état at this point,<sup>4</sup> the event must have served as a warning.<sup>5</sup>

The Reichswehr high command was compromised by its silent acceptance of the generals' deaths. Asked why it offered no resistance, Stauffenberg was later to say: 'People who have already shown themselves to be spineless twice before can hardly be expected to stand firm when another decision is called for.'<sup>6</sup> This was the first time they lost their nerve. The events in the summer of 1934 caused Henning von Tresckow, a captain in the army at the time, to turn against National Socialism, and Maj.-Gen. Hans Oster told listeners that the Reichswehr ought to have stepped in and 'nipped these gangster tactics in the bud'.<sup>7</sup>

Many leading figures in the Reichswehr, however, thought that the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933 might give the military, and above all the army, a chance to resume what they regarded as its proper role in the state. They included Lt.-Gen. Ludwig Beck, who was appointed to the post of head of the *Truppenamt* in October 1933. Hitler's conciliatory attitude towards the Reichswehr high command raised hopes, even in Beck, that the new chancellor would adopt the army general staff as his supreme advisory body on military matters, in line with the Prussian and German tradition of pre-1914 days (the army general staff being none other than Beck's *Truppenamt*, a cover name it had been forced to adopt given the terms of the Versailles treaty).<sup>8</sup>

But National Socialist defence policy was to take a different course. The intention had always been to establish a Luftwaffe as an independent third service, and this precluded any plan to give the army general staff overall responsibility for every aspect of the country's military strategy. Instead, the Wehrmacht office developed into the Wehrmacht high command with the Wehrmacht operations staff, and this had a further advantage from an ideological point of view. Hitler's idea of war was determined essentially by his experiences as a corporal on the western front in the First World War. He detested

<sup>3</sup> Pyta, 'Vorbereitungen'.

<sup>4</sup> See Mommsen, 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 572. The author himself observes however, in n. 8, that 'there is as yet no systematic account of the conservative plans for a coup d'état'.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 148.

<sup>7</sup> Ueberschär, 'Henning von Tresckow', 257; Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 47.

<sup>8</sup> These arguments are based mainly on Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, *passim*, in particular 106-9.

the traditional type of Prussian general staff with its status-conscious, often aristocratic, officers. The establishment of a new, more modern, Wehrmacht general staff seemed to him to present an opportunity to keep the classic Prussian German military elite out of power. Lt.-Gen. Wilhelm Keitel, head of the Wehrmacht operations staff since 1935, and his head of home defence, Col. Alfred Jodl, considered that the Führer did not need a large general staff to advise him on decisions, only an executive staff to carry out his decisions efficiently. Nazi ideology was beginning to affect the organization of the armed forces. Advisers were no longer required, only henchmen.

The second episode of spinelessness—to keep Stauffenberg's metaphor—was undoubtedly the shameful intrigue that led to the resignation of the commander-in-chief of the army, Fritsch. Details of Reich war minister von Blomberg's mésalliance were coming out at the same time, and many officers shared Hitler's views on the subject but his chosen solution, namely to assume supreme command of the Wehrmacht himself (the 'military seizure of power'),<sup>9</sup> did not meet with universal approval. As a result, Germany was to be forced to conduct the entire war without the benefit of a central authority that was competent in military matters. Many, even senior, officers did not realize this at once, but criticism of this radical reform of the military high command was to flare up at frequent intervals during the war, independently of any military resistance.

While it was possible to understand Hitler's reasons for dismissing Blomberg, the few army officers who knew something of the true circumstances were outraged and infuriated by the conduct of the Gestapo, the Party, and even Hitler himself, towards the commander-in-chief of the army, Fritsch. But they did nothing. This, and to a lesser extent the Blomberg affair, was what Stauffenberg meant when he spoke of a loss of nerve—a lack of backbone. For it very soon became clear that Fritsch had been the victim of a deliberate plot, in which Hermann Göring and also Heinrich Himmler's Gestapo were involved, and which had produced false evidence that Fritsch, who was unmarried, was guilty of homosexual practices.<sup>10</sup>

Neither Blomberg nor Fritsch offered any direct resistance but the Party authorities' attack on the inner structure of the army was perceived as an attempt to force it to conform.<sup>11</sup> A number of high-ranking officers approached Hitler in a combined effort to persuade him to reinstate the highly respected general, but to no avail. It became obvious that, after six years of National Socialist rule and a considerable expansion of the officer corps, which had already lost much of its *esprit de corps*, any open resistance to Hitler on the part of the army appeared to be out of the question.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, however, a small group of officers had taken the step from technical criticism of certain

<sup>9</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 315.

<sup>10</sup> Mühleisen, 'Die Fritsch-Krise'.

<sup>11</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 346.



aspects of the Third Reich to downright opposition.<sup>13</sup> For the first time, serious thought had been given to the possibility of using force against the SS and the Gestapo, to prevent any further incursions into military preserves and secure the army's power base.<sup>14</sup> This was in line with the basic aims of the chief of the general staff but at this point, early in 1938, those who wanted to see Fritsch completely rehabilitated did not really consider inviting Beck to take the lead in any action on his behalf.<sup>15</sup>

The question of the top command structure went beyond mere professional pride. In the opinion of Beck and his supporters, the actual consequences of disregarding the expert advice afforded by the army general staff represented a very great danger to the Reich. It was not so much a matter of stepping in, now that parliament had been stripped of its powers, to hold the balance against Hitler, who had assumed the combined functions of head of state and government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces in 1934,<sup>16</sup> but rather of providing sound advice to prevent foreign policy and military moves that would have serious consequences. The most important question was, of course, when Germany would be ready for another war since, in Beck's view, Hitler's absolute determination to proceed with his plans for military action against Czechoslovakia was bound to lead to war.

Beck's policy of opposing war in 1937 and 1938, culminating in his resignation from the post of chief of the army general staff on 18 August 1938, did not arise from any fundamental objection to war as a means of settling political disputes.<sup>17</sup> So his resignation cannot really be seen simply as a more or less automatic result of Hitler's policy.<sup>18</sup> It was after all Beck, with his plans for developing the Wehrmacht, who was instrumental in providing Hitler with the—albeit imperfect—military means to pursue his policy of expansion.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, the unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from Beck's interpretation of the foreign policy situation and the balance of military power was that Czechoslovakia would not fall quickly enough to enable Germany to withstand a French offensive in the west. He set the prospects out in detail in a written war game, although the actual plans did not altogether bear out his findings.<sup>20</sup> Only when Hitler remained set on war despite all the technical objections did Beck decide to step down. His decision was really a matter of bowing to necessity rather than an attempt to undermine the system, but it was also a protest

<sup>13</sup> Graml, 'Militärischer Widerstand', 87.

<sup>14</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 33.

<sup>15</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffmann, 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken', 106; see also Müller, 'Militärpolitik', 359.

<sup>17</sup> For an assessment of Beck's role in this matter, see the still eminently readable exchange of the early 1980s between Peter Hoffmann and Klaus-Jürgen Müller: Hoffmann, 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken'; Müller, 'Militärpolitik'; Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*. See also, more recently, Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 5.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 271.

<sup>19</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 99-100; Hoffmann, 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken', 116; Müller, 'Militärpolitik', 262.

against what he regarded as immoral and irresponsible warmongering. The new quartermaster general, Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, called the Führer a gambler.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, Hitler's war policy prompted the first real conspiracy against him. Whatever ideas may have been circulating in 1933 or 1934, in the autumn of 1938 officers were for the first time actually prepared to contemplate the possibility of establishing a military dictatorship. It is impossible to go into all the details here, but it is worth drawing attention to some aspects of the 'September conspiracy' that were to acquire a certain importance in the course of the war. The resistance of the national-conservative elite evolved fairly steadily, over time and in respect of its adherents, out of alternative thinking or opposition within the parameters of the system. However 1938 brought profound changes in the role of the armed forces in the structure of the state, changes that greatly facilitated Hitler's irresponsible policy of war and finally caused the core conspirators to cross the line and engage in resistance that might bring down the system.<sup>22</sup>

The forms of action considered at this time were to exercise a decisive influence right up to 20 July 1944. A small inner circle was already resolved, in the autumn of 1938, not only to seize Hitler but to kill him. This group recruited Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, who had already taken part in the assassination of Walther Rathenau in 1922 and could therefore be said to have some useful experience.<sup>23</sup> The idea—according to the conspirators—was that military units under trusted leaders should then occupy key positions in the capital and eliminate the rest of the government. The military would assume executive powers within the country although, initially at least, the actual members of the army high command refused to join the conspiracy. Some of the practical plans were still by no means complete in 1938; indeed there was something almost amateurish about them.<sup>24</sup> All considerations in this connection were based on trust in military discipline, that is to say on the assumption that the troops to be deployed in the coup would follow their military leaders in an attack on the National Socialist government, an assumption that the conspirators had not questioned despite the evidence that Nazi ideology was gaining an increasing hold in the Wehrmacht.<sup>25</sup> In any case, the selection of suitable military units was determined primarily by whether the regimental and divisional commanders were prepared to take part in the coup.

<sup>21</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 15; Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 31; Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 58; Stahl, 'General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel', 241.

<sup>22</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 37–8; Schieder 'Zwei Generationen', 443.

<sup>23</sup> Meinl, *Nationalsozialisten gegen Hitler*, 283–98; Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 339.

<sup>24</sup> Details are given in Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 119–32; see also Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 365.

<sup>25</sup> Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 444. There are some indications however that, even in 1938, the conspirators already intended to secure the loyalty of the troops to be deployed in the coup by presenting it as a response to an SS putsch: Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 118; Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 289.

A further factor, already apparent at this early date, was the extent to which plans for a coup d'état depended on the attitude taken abroad. Some simply wanted to stop Hitler going to war. Others, among the more resolute members of the Abwehr led by Oster, Maj. Helmuth Groscurth (on the general staff), and Heinz, wanted to use the acute threat of war as a pretext for getting rid of the whole abominable regime.<sup>26</sup> But everything depended ultimately on the attitude of the British and, to a lesser extent, the French governments. Their refusal to yield to Hitler was essential, combined with the threat of war, to justify a coup. However the resistance, in its contacts with London, demanded the same territorial concessions as the German government in office—review of the territorial changes based on the Versailles treaty was obviously a key element in the partial identity of aims.<sup>27</sup> The British government clearly felt that there was little to be gained in diplomatic terms from supporting the resistance.<sup>28</sup> Neville Chamberlain's and Édouard Daladier's policy of appeasement took the ground away from under the conspirators' feet. Dependence on the attitude of the western powers and on the operation of traditional military command structures was to be a constant thread in the history of the German resistance from 1938 on.<sup>29</sup>

The silent revolt against the seizure of power in the army in the spring, and the coup d'état planned in the autumn of 1938, have been the subject of conflicting interpretations in the research literature. A particularly burning question is whether Beck merely 'wanted to maintain the position of a defeated elite force even under the changed conditions obtaining after the war [the First World War], whereas other military men . . . were already prepared to give up the traditional trappings of military power in order to resume the conduct of an industrial campaign involving the whole of society through the comprehensive politicization and socialization of the armed forces in a militarized society'<sup>30</sup> or whether, acting from strong moral conviction, Beck had renounced a policy that would lead to war, and was determined to speak out 'in the interests of the nation and warn against an irresponsible and hazardous foreign policy'.<sup>31</sup> The wording of Beck's memorandum of 16 July 1938 suggests a way out of the dilemma: 'The final decisions on the survival of the nation are at stake here. History will judge these leaders to have blood on their hands if they fail to act in accordance with their professional and political knowledge and their conscience. The soldier's duty of obedience ends at the point where knowledge, conscience, and a sense of responsibility forbid the execution of an order.'<sup>32</sup> In

<sup>26</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 92.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffmann, 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken', 108.

<sup>28</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 192.

<sup>29</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 125–6, 132; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 108; Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 7.

<sup>31</sup> Hoffmann, 'Becks militärpolitisches Denken', 117.

<sup>30</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 52–3.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 552.

Beck's view, 'professionally and politically' irresponsible decisions threatened the 'survival of the nation', and were therefore morally irresponsible. In the summer of 1938, Beck was not yet engaged in active resistance, in the sense of seeking to overthrow the Nazi regime, but the rebels who took that step a few months later knew that he was on their side.<sup>33</sup>

(b) *1939 to 1944*

Even among the members of the September 1938 conspiracy, only a few were prepared to regard the imminent threat of war as an excuse for attempting an assassination and a coup; the first consideration for most national-conservatives was to prevent war. After 1 September 1939, that was no longer an option. At first, the war had a crippling effect on the carefully contrived structures. In some cases, the painstaking plans for a putsch were upset by promotions, regroupings, and postings; in others, by the waning opposition to the regime. Efforts continued to be made to stop the war spreading, and in particular to sabotage the start of serious military operations against France. But hardly any officers were prepared—without any assurance from the enemy, moreover<sup>34</sup>—to proceed with an attack on the supreme head of state during the conduct of a successful campaign.<sup>35</sup> The few who did not give up their resistance activities (Beck, Oster, Hans Bernd Gisevius, and Groscurth) now adopted a more radical stance: 'The transition from an alternative policy to fundamental opposition is gradually perceptible . . . It was now no longer a matter of a struggle for power that might pose a threat to the system but of bringing the system down.'<sup>36</sup> But this was now a very small circle indeed. Its ability to act was limited as a result of the fact that other erstwhile high-ranking conspirators, including above all Beck's successor as chief of the general staff, Franz Halder, had now ceased to engage in any opposition activities.<sup>37</sup>

Also, any possible action to prevent the further extension of the war in the summer of 1941, that is to say a German attack on the Soviet Union, had to contend with the widespread anti-Communism in conservative circles. Even many non-Nazis thought war with the Soviet Union was unavoidable, and the experience of a series of easily won victories, the rash underestimating of the Soviet military potential, combined with the aforesaid anti-Bolshevism, more or less precluded any opposition to Operation BARBAROSSA.<sup>38</sup>

The Wehrmacht's early successes initially stifled any impulse to question the efficacy of the high command. However, as Hitler gradually introduced further changes as the war went on, the issue of the military command structure loomed

<sup>33</sup> See also Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 81.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 148, 161, 169.

<sup>35</sup> Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 6; Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 360; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 185–6.

<sup>36</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 41.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 185–6; Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 120; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 128. On Halder, see Hartmann, *Halder*, which supersedes the earlier account by Schall-Riauour, *Aufstand und Gehorsam*. See also Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 60–1.

<sup>38</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 357.

increasingly large even for those opposed to the regime. This was particularly so after Hitler assumed supreme command of the army on 19 December 1941.<sup>39</sup> Criticism of that step was by no means confined to the narrow circle of the military resistance. It was common even in circles that had little or no connection with the opposition, which was very subdued at the time. Thus, Ulrich de Maizière, then a major on the general staff, reports that the change at the top of the army command structure was perceived as a change of system.<sup>40</sup> Maj.-Gen. Adolf Heusinger, head of operations on the army general staff, blamed Hitler's chronic distrust of the army.<sup>41</sup> Later, even senior National Socialist guidance officers (NSFO) with a mission to convert the army to the new ideology pointed out that it felt sidelined by Hitler's decision to retain the supreme command permanently. 'It was bound to be seen . . . as a negative assessment of the present-day quality of the officer class.'<sup>42</sup>

On the eastern front, in the staff of Army Group Centre, the increasing curtailment of the general staff's powers and disregard for its expert professional advice was one of the main motives that prompted the operations officer there, Col. Henning von Tresckow, to recruit a resistance group and set out to bring about a change in the high command, if necessary by force.<sup>43</sup> Criticism of the high command was most widespread, however, in the army general staff in Berlin, as members of the conspiracy confirmed after 20 July 1944: 'Blumenthal says that the conduct of the war and the position of the Wehrmacht in the National Socialist state were the subject of almost universal criticism in the Bendlerstraße . . . The common view was that, even at the beginning of the war, the Wehrmacht's position was not what it ought to have been. Lt. von Haefen repeatedly told Blumenthal that the general staff and the officer corps must try to exert a stronger influence on the Wehrmacht.' Blumenthal said he had criticized the 'National Socialist leadership' only when he felt 'duty bound' to do so. 'For example, we have no minister of war. This creates difficulties for the defence of the Reich as a whole.' And: 'By the end of 1941, the prevailing view in sections of the army and Wehrmacht high commands was that things would end badly if changes were not made in the position of the Wehrmacht and the conduct of the war.'<sup>44</sup> A situation in which 'the same polycratic structures prevailed in the Wehrmacht as in other centres of power in the Third Reich, namely the structures of the state sector',<sup>45</sup> was incompatible with efficiency as many officers in the general staff conceived it. Maj. Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, of the organization department of the army high command, used to begin lectures on the Reich's command structure with the remark that 'the structure in the upper echelons of the Wehrmacht [was]

<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of Hitler's motives in connection with the crisis in Germany's conduct of the war in the Soviet Union, see also *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 682-3.

<sup>40</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 168.

<sup>42</sup> Jürgen Förster on ideological warfare in the present volume, 634-5.

<sup>43</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 122-3; Aretin, *Henning von Tresckow*, 297.

<sup>44</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 334-5 (1 Sept 1944).

<sup>45</sup> Nolzen, 'Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation', 71.

even sillier than any structure the most capable officers in the general staff could possibly devise if they were given the task of devising the most illogical structure for a high command in wartime'.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the changes at the top in the structure of the Wehrmacht as a whole were primarily to the detriment of the army, which was unpopular with Hitler. The decision that the head of army equipment and commander of the replacement army (Chef HRüst u. BdE), responsible for supplying the Wehrmacht with replacements in men and matériel, was no longer to be under the control of the army but be answerable largely to the Wehrmacht high command, effectively deprived the army of direct access to its most important resources.<sup>47</sup> The establishment of special Luftwaffe ground combat units (as a 'third army', after the Waffen-SS) sharpened the battle for resources and the rivalry between the various forces.<sup>48</sup> The reorganization at all levels arose initially from the deteriorating war situation, but it was to have long-term consequences. The growing crisis gave Party functionaries an excuse, under the pretext of improving efficiency, to increase the power of the NSDAP and reduce that of the traditional ruling elite, including the military. On 16 November 1942, Hitler brought the entire state apparatus under the influence of the Party, exacerbating the 'administrative infighting' in the power structure of the Third Reich.<sup>49</sup>

Alternative proposals could still be made so long as they remained within the parameters of the system, but such proposals, focused entirely on military efficiency, underestimated Hitler's more ambitious plans for the long-term transformation of German society. Thus Gen. Friedrich Fromm, the commander of the replacement army responsible for men and matériel, had already alerted the Führer to the limited economic possibilities in October. At the end of November 1942, he submitted a memorandum to Hitler—'At the height of power'—setting out the basic facts of the war in terms of men and matériel, and his own ideas on the subject: 'The only task of the Wehrmacht now is to prevent serious setbacks until a satisfactory settlement can be negotiated. To that end, all military and civil powers must unite to form an efficient high command . . . This clearly means that the state leadership must concentrate primarily on foreign policy and home affairs. Hence the proposal to transfer command of military operations, which cannot now end in victory, to a professional soldier and to leave the Führer, as leader of the German people, free to devote all his energies to the crucial political negotiations.'<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 145.

<sup>47</sup> Carl-Erik Köhler [General der Kavallerie] and [Generalmajor a.D.] Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041dd [1950], BA-MA, Za 1/1932, fo. 181; Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 305.

<sup>48</sup> Stumpf, 'Die Luftwaffe als drittes Heer'; for an account of its place in the wider context of the multiplicity of powers in the Third Reich, see also 890–1.

<sup>49</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 905.

<sup>50</sup> On Kroener's 1941 study, 'Zwischen Blitzsieg und Verhandlungsfrieden: Für die Denkschrift 1942 Carl-Erik Köhler [General der Kavallerie] and [Generalmajor a.D.] Hellmuth Reinhardt, Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041dd [1950], BA-MA, Za 1/1932, fo. 216–17.



Fromm did not belong to any resistance group at this point—or indeed later—and, ostensibly, spoke only as a professional soldier. But from that day on, he was *persona non grata* with Hitler, and the process of curtailing the powers of the military gathered momentum, leaving them with little say in the management of the nation's resources. The generals spoke quite openly about the shortcomings of the high command—except, of course, for Hitler. A number of field marshals finally decided to advise Hitler, in the autumn of 1943, to appoint a C-in-C East (OB Ost)—in line with a similar post created in the First World War—but even this tentative move came to nothing.<sup>51</sup> Field Marshal von Manstein had repeatedly urged Hitler to take this step, but he could see no way of exerting pressure on the Führer and he would have no part in any use of force.<sup>52</sup> Heusinger was again one of those who initially wanted to believe in the possibility of effecting a change at the top within the parameters of the system. The division of operational control between the OKH and OKW was a constant source of irritation to him, in that it caused unnecessary friction.<sup>53</sup> In May 1943 Heusinger still did not see exactly how the desired aim of effectively removing some of Hitler's powers was to be achieved. At the beginning of June 1943, when Henning von Tresckow told him of the conspiracy against Hitler which, according to Tresckow, was to remedy this unfortunate situation,<sup>54</sup> Heusinger at least saw no reason to take any official steps against Tresckow.

The path from considering alternatives within the parameters of the system to a coup that would bring the system down often consisted of small steps, when it came to the structure of the wartime high command. The transition was fluid. At the end of August 1943, Gen. Hellmuth Stieff spoke to the C-in-C Army Group Centre, Field Marshal Hans Günther von Kluge, about the problem of the command structure. Stieff was one of the conspirators, there was a resolute group of conspirators on Kluge's staff, with Tresckow at their centre, and it is to be supposed that this was another attempt to gain Kluge's support for a coup.<sup>55</sup> An alternative military high command structure was a perfectly safe topic of discussion among officers and this provided an ideal opening for sounding out potential participants in the conspiracy. Thus, at the first secret meeting between Beck and Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, recently dismissed by Hitler, the main topic of conversation was the command structure: 'We even went so far as to criticize the Führer's military measures. We were particularly annoyed that people like Brauchitsch, Halder, List and others, who in our opinion were very capable, had been dismissed . . . Above

<sup>51</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 6–7, 227–8; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 159–61; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 88 (28 July 1944); Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 348–9; Maj.-Gen. Freiherr von Gersdorff, 'Beitrag zur Geschichte des 20. Juli 1944, Oberursel, 12. I. 1946', IFZ, ED 88, 93–104, here 94; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 135.

<sup>53</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 224; Stumpf, 'Die Luftwaffe als drittes Heer', 858; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1067–8.

<sup>54</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 273.  
<sup>55</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 88 (28 July 1944); Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 348–9. Kluge raised the subject himself in a conversation with Adm. Canaris when he visited Smolensk in 1943, *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 424 (29 Sept. 1944).



all, we condemned the decision to dismiss the commander-in-chief of the army. We both agreed that something must be done to reinstate these able men. In this connection, I said I would be perfectly willing to stand in as commander-in-chief of the army, if it should come to that.'<sup>56</sup>

Maj. Joachim Kuhn of the general staff told his Soviet interrogators in the autumn of 1944 that one of the prime motives for his resistance was that he had been responsible for matters relating to the structure of the military high command in the organization department of the army general staff until March 1944, initially (1942) under Maj. Graf Stauffenberg.<sup>57</sup> Even then, Stauffenberg had pressed strongly for change, called for Hitler's removal, and declared himself ready to help bring it about.<sup>58</sup> When, having recovered from serious wounds suffered in Africa, Stauffenberg was appointed chief of staff in the General Army Office in October 1943, he raised the matter again as a key argument for moving against Hitler: 'Stauffenberg was subsequently much exercised over the situation that was developing as a result of the military state of emergency . . . and the problem of effectively limiting the Führer's direct conduct of the war, a move regarded in military circles as highly advisable. . . . The state of emergency meant that all posts directly concerned with the conduct of the war ought to have been replaced by military posts actually responsible for the conduct of the war.'<sup>59</sup> It is clear from this statement alone that it was no longer merely a matter of establishing a new basis for the conduct of military operations but of taking all other aspects of the overall conduct of the war out of the hands of the Party—and the politicians—and putting the military in charge. Coming from a subordinate of the commander of the replacement army, that naturally meant above all handing over responsibility for men and matériel. At the end of 1943, Stauffenberg took this idea even further when he persuaded Maj. Ludwig von Leonrod to join the conspiracy: 'Leonrod was in the picture. He knew that the government was to go and the Wehrmacht was to assume executive powers.'<sup>60</sup> At this point, if the Gestapo reports of what Leonrod said are correct, the plan to change the structure of the military high command had finally become a plan to change the whole government.<sup>61</sup>

Of course, Stauffenberg was exceptionally open with Leonrod, who was a member of the same regiment. He did not explain the full extent of the proposed coup d'état so clearly to everyone he hoped to persuade to take

<sup>56</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 42–3 (24 July 1944); IMT, 33, doc. 3881-PS, 352.

<sup>57</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 377.

<sup>58</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 153–4.

<sup>59</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 335 (1 Sept. 1944) and 33 (24 July 1944). Stauffenberg had already asked fellow-officers in the organization section of the army general staff: 'What can happen under this leadership, and how will it end?', Maj.-Gen. Freiherr von Gersdorff, 'Beitrag zur Geschichte des 20. Juli 1944, Oberursel, 12.1.1946', IfZ, ED 88, 93–104, here 353.

<sup>60</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 54 (26 July 1944).

<sup>61</sup> See also *ibid.* 225 (15 Aug. 1944), reporting a conversation between Gen. Erich Fellgiebel and his deputy, Lt.-Gen. Fritz Thiele, in the late autumn of 1943, when 'a planned change of regime' was apparently likewise mentioned.

part. When Cavalry Cap. Friedrich Scholz-Babisch was ordered to Berlin in December 1943 and, much to his surprise, confronted by Stauffenberg with plans for a coup, he was told it was merely a matter of 'unifying the military leadership'—and on that basis Scholz-Babisch was quite prepared to join in.<sup>62</sup> Stauffenberg approached his old friend from military academy days, Col. (general staff) Eberhard Finckh, in much the same way. On 23 June 1944, Stauffenberg 'suddenly took him aside and explained his views on the military situation in the clearest terms, without in any way swearing him to silence. He ended with the words: "We have no proper marshals left. They are all shit-scared and never contradict the Führer, no matter what orders he may give. They won't tell him how serious they think the situation is."'<sup>63</sup> And Capt. Ludwig Gehre of the Abwehr told the Gestapo that he only wanted to improve efficiency: 'It will be a matter of replacing all posts directly concerned with the conduct of the war by military posts actually responsible for the conduct of the war. The military emergency provided the means to do it.'<sup>64</sup> The interrogators could not conceal their surprise that the need for a change in the structure at the top of the high command should have been so widely and so openly discussed: 'It seems to have been perfectly normal practice in the Bendlerstraße to abandon all sense of professional duty and ordinary caution in this connection.'<sup>65</sup>

Thus, the conspirators' first telegrams, dispatched from OKW headquarters in the Bendlerstraße late in the afternoon of 20 July 1944, were largely concerned with the proposed new structure of the high command and referred quite specifically in this connection to Beck's demands in the pre-war period.<sup>66</sup> The first telegram, signed by Field Marshal von Witzleben, described the situation—'an unscrupulous clique of party leaders who have never seen action'—and announced that in this 'hour of extreme peril' the Reich government had transferred overall command of the Wehrmacht to Witzleben, thereby establishing a military C-in-C of the Wehrmacht who was independent of the government. The ill-fated concept of two parallel forces, the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS, was also to end: 'The entire Waffen-SS is to be incorporated in the army with immediate effect.' Some consideration had also been given to abolishing the Luftwaffe (known for its Nazi sympathies) as an independent arm of the forces and creating an 'extended general staff', comprising the army and the Luftwaffe, which would assume central responsibility for the conduct of the war.<sup>67</sup>

The Gestapo's analysis in this connection is unacceptably short. In the eyes of the system, it all came down to a question of power politics: 'Considerations of power politics continually obtrude. The designated circle of generals and members of the officer corps found its authority curbed by the Führer, in his

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 312 (29 Aug. 1944).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 313 (29 Aug. 1944).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 527 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 49 (25 July 1944) and 291-4 (25 Aug. 1944).

<sup>66</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 109.

<sup>67</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 20-1 (24 July 1944), quotations 24.

capacity as C-in-C of the Wehrmacht.' This was allegedly clear from a statement by Tresckow, who is supposed to have said among other things: 'Only if a fully independent Wehrmacht general staff had been successfully established, with a general in charge, only then would things look different, that is to say only then would the Wehrmacht be in a position to draw the practical power policy conclusions the situation seems to require.'<sup>68</sup> This interpretation overlooks the fact that, in the conspirators' view, the right structure at the top was essential to the proper conduct of the war. If the head of state decided not to call on the professional expertise of the military, notably the general staff, the conduct of the war would inevitably be seen as amateurish.

Behind the question of the structure at the top of the high command, the underlying problem of a responsible approach to war and peace had already arisen in 1938, and by 1944 the course of the war had rendered it even more acute. Moreover, it was becoming increasingly clear that a change at the very top was a *sine qua non* for peace, whatever form it might take. The Allies would never make peace with Hitler and his entourage. It was physically and morally impossible either to continue the war or to bring it to an end while the existing structure remained in place. To change it—and that means to change it by force—therefore became a moral imperative.

That was why the idea of a change at the top, which only at first glance seemed so innocuous—a good subject for bar-room chat—eventually became so explosive. If the harmless conversations between officers in the general staff were pursued to their logical conclusion, they must inevitably in the course of time lead to the removal of the present regime—and Stauffenberg was not the man to spare his interlocutors the ultimate consequences of such ideas.<sup>69</sup>

## 2. AN AMATEUR AT THE HELM

The consequences of Hitler's lack of professional expertise for the military leadership of the Reich were all too clear. Even young people still at university realized that it was responsible for the latest catastrophe at Stalingrad. The last leaflet of the band of Munich students known as the 'White Rose' opens on a sarcastic note: 'Three hundred and thirty thousand German men have been senselessly and irresponsibly driven to death and destruction by the inspired strategy of our World War I Private First Class. Führer, we thank you!'<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 526. A similar interpretation is also to be found in Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 983, where the following assertion is made: 'The outstanding characteristic of the military and civilian "national conservative" opposition—irrespective of the criticism of the policy of depriving Jews of their rights—was that it appeared at first to be prompted more by conflicts over leadership than by complete rejection of wrongdoing.'

<sup>69</sup> *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, introduction, p.xxv.

<sup>70</sup> Scholl, *Students against Tyranny*, 91; the White Rose leaflets are also posted on the Museums Online (LeMo) website under the title 'Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand. Ausstellung Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus': [www.dhm.de/lemo/html/nazi/widerstand/weisse-rose/index.html](http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/nazi/widerstand/weisse-rose/index.html).

The Scholls and their friends had raised a subject that had gone the rounds in professional circles before the war and was now, since Stalingrad, much more widely discussed. The 'increasing deprofessionalization of the system' was something the military had in common with other sections of National Socialist society. The appointment of Joachim von Ribbentrop, a man with no diplomatic training, to replace Ernst Freiherr von Neurath as Reich foreign minister corresponded more or less to the decision to replace the army general staff as central advisers on military matters by the Wehrmacht high command under Keitel, with his 'subaltern's loyalty',<sup>71</sup> or the forced resignation of the commander-in-chief of the army, Gen. von Fritsch.

During the period of great successes, only a few calmly refused to recognize Hitler's military 'genius', and scarcely anyone was ready to acknowledge how much his victory in France owed to luck, the ability of a few generals, and above all certain guiding principles of the Prussian-German tradition.<sup>72</sup> The sceptics included Henning von Tresckow, who bitterly castigated the 'military folly' of the German leadership in 1940 and the summer of 1941, awarding Hitler the prize for 'amateur strategy'.<sup>73</sup>

Hitler's operational decisions in August 1941, above all the decision to split the German advance into the Soviet Union,<sup>74</sup> caused military experts and professionals at every level right up to the top of the army general staff to reflect again on the 'bloody amateurism' of the supreme commander of the Wehrmacht. The expression originated with Stieff, who was employed in the operations section of the army general staff at the time.<sup>75</sup> Halder, who had largely withdrawn from the conspiracy on the outbreak of war, resigned from the post of chief of the general staff just as his predecessor, Beck, had done four years earlier—a further step in the 'deprofessionalization' of the leadership.<sup>76</sup> The change was seen even by the younger officers in the general staff as fundamental: 'Hitler preferred young, tough, dynamic advisers. He had less time for the typical intellectual, thoughtful staff officer, who did not shy away from uncomfortable facts. Optimism, confidence, and belief took precedence over sound common sense.'<sup>77</sup> And Maj. (general staff) Kuhn, speaking as a Soviet prisoner of war in 1944, said: 'We already had daily evidence in 1942 of the many operational and organizational errors that were being made at the top. . . . The decision to create the Luftwaffe field divisions is one of the most notorious.'<sup>78</sup> Here too, we see once again the close connection between a defective structure at the top, crippled by ideological dogma, and the glaring errors in leadership that undermined the German war effort. Stauffenberg spoke for many general staff officers when, visiting a

<sup>71</sup> Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung', 413; see also Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 31, 35; Knox, '1 October 1942', 815.

<sup>72</sup> Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 409–35.

<sup>73</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 449; Silex, *Mit Kommentar*, 220.

<sup>74</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 95; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv, 569–94.

<sup>75</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 181; Stieff, 'Briefe', 123 (23 Aug. 1941).

<sup>76</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II, 883.

<sup>77</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 79.

<sup>78</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 377.

wounded fellow-officer, Peter Sauerbruch, in hospital in Munich, he suddenly asked him—deploying exactly the same arguments as the ‘White Rose’—why ‘he was so taken aback by the senseless orders to stand firm. I had had enough opportunities to see the leadership in action at headquarters to enable me to foresee the Stalingrad debacle.’<sup>79</sup>

Hitler’s decision to reject the proposal, made by the organization department of the army general staff during the winter crisis of 1941/2, to disband shattered divisions in order to bring other large formations up to strength, was also ideologically motivated or at least determined by the demands of propaganda. ‘The propaganda illusion that the war was already won, that it was merely a matter of bringing it to an end, could not admit there were depleted and exhausted divisions.’<sup>80</sup> The result was divisions with fewer and fewer troops to send to the front, and hastily assembled formations, such as the Valkyrie divisions formed in the winter crisis of 1941/2, of which an entry in the Third Panzer Army diary for February 1942 records: ‘If the situation had not required their immediate deployment, it would have been a crime to use them.’<sup>81</sup>

This amateur, ‘dilettante’ spirit infected not only the top echelons of the Reich and the Wehrmacht. It was also apparent at the front. Here too, Maj. Ulrich de Maizière, who had nothing to do with the resistance, is a highly reliable witness. In February 1943, he was dispatched by the army general staff to the SS-Leibstandarte division of the Waffen-SS, on a tour of inspection. He was horrified by the amateurish style of the commander, SS-Gruppenführer Sepp Dietrich: ‘The commanders of this Waffen-SS division did not seem to realize that brave and ideologically misguided young men were being senselessly sacrificed through insane arrogance and a lofty disdain for sound training. Belief in the Führer was more important to them than professional ability. Shocked and sobered by the experience, I returned to headquarters where I was given an opportunity to report my impressions to the chief of the general staff.’<sup>82</sup> These comments apply equally to the Luftwaffe field divisions. Göring had persuaded Hitler to establish these on the grounds of an ideological aversion to the ‘reactionary’ army, the idea being to replace sound training with ideological loyalty to the Party line, ‘positively revolutionary methods of training and deployment, contrary to every precept’.<sup>83</sup> This attitude, combined with the use of commanders with little or no experience of the front, led to unacceptably high losses in these divisions, as in the Waffen-SS. The general staff reacted accordingly: ‘For military commanders with years of professional training to be treated in the same way as commanders of another and much smaller force, some of them completely unqualified . . . is an almost intolerable burden.’<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Sauerbruch, ‘Bericht’, 269.

<sup>80</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 886.

<sup>81</sup> Rathke, ‘“Walküre”-Divisionen’, 55.

<sup>82</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 77–8. The total losses of the Waffen-SS divisions were however lower than those of comparable army divisions, Wegner, ‘Anmerkungen’, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Stumpf, ‘Die Luftwaffe als drittes Heer’, 881, 879.

<sup>84</sup> Note on a conversation in OKH on 25 June 1942, quoted in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 528 (15 Dec. 1944).

Hitler's tendency to interfere in crucial operational and tactical matters gave rise to some inappropriate decisions. Rudolf-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff, serving as major and 3rd general staff officer in Army Group Centre high command under Field Marshal von Kluge in 1942, reported an incident of this kind that enabled him to win over his C-in-C—temporarily at least—to the idea of taking action against Hitler.<sup>85</sup> For many general staff officers, it was their insight into Hitler's conduct of the war that led them step by step to resist. In the case of the quartermaster general of the army, Lt.-Gen. Eduard Wagner, it was the decision to split the 1942 summer offensive that first raised doubts,<sup>86</sup> and Stieff changed his mind for similar reasons: 'When a person becomes a megalomaniac and refuses to listen to advice, he is doomed . . . Obedience has its limits. And I certainly intend to stay on the side of reason.' This was 'a professional's gradually matured recognition that he must refuse to obey Hitler's unreasonable orders'<sup>87</sup>—and in Stieff's case, there were also moral scruples on account of the many crimes Germans had committed. Here too, it was often a short step from professional criticism to full participation in the conspiracy—or, as in Heusinger's case,<sup>88</sup> just to a fairly full knowledge of what was going on.

The connection is particularly clear in the case of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who had up to then never been critical of Hitler. The seed of doubt was sown by his experience during the defensive action at El Alamein, when Hitler intervened and attempted to prevent him from ordering the timely retreat of Panzer Army Africa. In subsequent correspondence with his wife, he was bitterly critical of the flight from reality, particularly on the part of Reich marshal Hermann Göring, commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, whom he accused of indulging in 'military opium-pipe dreams'. But Rommel's criticism now extended to the Führer, who had previously been exempt: 'I realized that Adolf Hitler did not want to see things in their true light, and that emotion was his defence against reason.'<sup>89</sup> Rommel expressed similar sentiments in 1944, in a conversation in France with a close friend, Vice-Adm. Friedrich Ruge, who recorded the talk in a diary entry: 'Conduct of war amateurish.'<sup>90</sup>

It became increasingly clear that the Reich was heading for a military catastrophe under the present leadership—reason enough for resistance, in many people's view.<sup>91</sup> Some general staff officers had already recognized that this was directly connected with the fundamentally criminal nature of the Nazi system. Whereas the general staff took the conventional view that its business was to destroy the military power of the enemy and win the war, Hitler was

<sup>85</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 123. <sup>86</sup> Peter, 'General der Artillerie Eduard Wagner', 266.

<sup>87</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 344, where the quotation occurs.

<sup>88</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 270.

<sup>89</sup> Remy, *Mythos Rommel*, 170; see also *Germany and the Second World War*, vi, 790, and Stumpf, 'Erwin Rommel'.

<sup>90</sup> IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), excerpt from Ruge's diary.

<sup>91</sup> This was the case for reserve Lt.-Col. Dr Cäsar von Hofacker in Paris, see Schramm, *Aufstand*, 22.



engaged in an ideological crusade to transform the whole of Europe and, not least, German society itself. The ensuing gap proved to be unbridgeable.<sup>92</sup>

Criticism of the 'amateurish', 'dilettante' leadership and discussion of the top command structure were common currency in the army. The topic was therefore to have pride of place in the first announcements after the coup. The conspirators could reasonably expect widespread support, certainly among troops at the front, for the demand for greater prudence in the conduct of the war. This was reflected in the wording of Goerdeler's appeals and speeches. A draft appeal to the German people reads: 'Germans! A monstrous thing has happened before our very eyes in the past few years. Ignoring expert advice, Hitler has unscrupulously sacrificed whole armies to his lust for fame, his arrogant obsession with power, his blasphemous illusion . . . His decision to take command has inevitably . . . doomed our brave sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers to destruction.'<sup>93</sup> The wording of the proposed 'Appeal to the Wehrmacht' was even stronger: 'You face yet another danger in securing the success of the victories you have won, serving under trained and experienced men, namely Hitler's belief in his "genius as a commander", an attribute claimed in a fit of insane delusion and praised to the skies in the most repulsive manner by the lickspittles who surround him. Even a cobbler has to learn his trade. A man who aspires to lead an army of a million men must learn his craft the hard way in military service at various levels, and must show that he can do the job . . . Hundreds of thousands of brave men have paid with their lives, their health, or their freedom, for one man's impudence and vanity.'<sup>94</sup>

Beck, as head of state designate, took the first essential operational decisions on the evening of 20 July 1944. Army Group North, which was in danger of being cut off in Courland as a result of a pointless order from Hitler to stand firm, was ordered to retreat immediately—an order which would probably have saved thousands of German troops from death, injury, or capture, but which was overtaken by events and never carried out.<sup>95</sup> How far such considerations were from the minds of those in Germany who were responsible for the conduct of the war was made clear to the remaining general staff officers next morning, when their newly appointed chief-of-staff, Lt.-Gen. Heinz Guderian, addressed them, describing the widespread scepticism about the situation in the east as 'defeatism and pessimism', threatening to arrest and shoot them, and dismissing the past work of the general staff as 'completely negative'.<sup>96</sup>

Even the motives for criticizing the 'amateurish conduct of the war' were mixed, including practical and more fundamental, moral, and ethical considerations. The individual combination of factors differed in the various members of the conspiracy, and some experienced a change over time in this connection

<sup>92</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 157.

<sup>93</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 139–40 (4 Aug. 1944).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 200 (11 Aug. 1944); see also Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 125.

<sup>95</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 366.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 369; but see also Meyer, 'Generaloberst Guderian', 15–16.



that is difficult to understand. Goerdeler's words show, however, that the professional soldier's determination to conduct the war in accordance with the rules of the art of war was increasingly accompanied by moral arguments, and that senselessly sending 'hundreds of thousands of brave men' off to be slaughtered was seen as a crime. 'For men like Tresckow and Stauffenberg, the central consideration was to save the army.'<sup>97</sup> This was more than just an attempt, against the odds, to win a war that was already lost. This is about officers for whom the survival of the men entrusted to them was not a matter of indifference. For the Prussian, Tresckow, and the Swabian, Stauffenberg, the end of the war, whatever form it might take, did not mean the end of their duty to the army.

### 3. A NEW MILITARY ELITE

'Saving the army' meant not only keeping up its strength in the sense of numbers, but also maintaining the continuity of a social organization that appeared to be increasingly threatened by National Socialist military policy. Nowhere was the clash between conservative ideas about values and class, and the National Socialist desire for change, so acute as it was within the forces, particularly the army. Under the Weimar Republic, the army had had the sense of being an independent social system in an alien society.<sup>98</sup> The officer corps was recruited primarily from the traditional 'officer classes'.<sup>99</sup> The revolutionary aspects of National Socialist policy were clearly rejected but, in view of the broad identity of interests and aims in the areas of foreign and military policy, the 'plebeian' excesses were initially accepted as being unavoidable and were probably ascribed to the transition from the unwelcome wholesale democracy of Weimar to the 'New Reich'.<sup>100</sup> 'The rejection of a classless society was associated with the neo-conservative thinking of the Weimar years and received a substantial boost from the youth movement.'<sup>101</sup> Yet from the moment the Nazis seized power, the readiness of some officers to swallow their whole philosophy hook, line, and sinker drove a wedge through the hitherto solid ranks of the officer corps. Looking back, Heusinger considered that the 'closed and united officer corps, in the old sense', ceased to exist in 1933,<sup>102</sup> and that was yet another reason why there was never any question of military action against the National Socialist 'seizure of power' in 1933. Hitler's moves against the officer corps, starting with the assassination of two generals in 1934, were perceived as an attack not just on the position of the military in terms of power, but also on the very structure of their organization.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 125.

<sup>98</sup> The idea that 'standardization, militarization, and ritualization were typical of the political culture' of the Weimar Republic (Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 279) was not one that most officers would have recognized.

<sup>99</sup> For further details, see Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 234–97.

<sup>100</sup> Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät', 536.

<sup>101</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 165.

<sup>102</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 169, 116–17, 300–1. <sup>103</sup> Ueberschär, 'Henning von Tresckow', 257.

In the longer term, the increase in the strength of the officer corps as a result of rearmament after 1935 was particularly damaging to existing relations.<sup>104</sup> The influx of officers from strata of society that had not previously been regarded as a source of officer material was attributable partly to the rapid rearmament and partly to National Socialist ideology. It was precisely this 'inward-looking popular promise of equality' that made the new regime appear so attractive to broad sections of the population. Nothing, it seemed, was proof against the new social mobility, not even the Wehrmacht officer corps. The line drawn between 'Aryans' and the rest corresponded, in theory at least, to the levelling of social distinctions within the 'national community', the *Volkgemeinschaft*.<sup>105</sup> Officers cast in the traditional mould found this development revolutionary; Beck, for example, spoke of his opponents in the 1938 crisis as the 'radical side'.<sup>106</sup> Worse was to follow: Beck reported that Hitler was supposed to have said in the same connection: 'I shall have to make do with the old generals for the campaign against Czechoslovakia, but I shall have a new generation of commanders in place for the campaign against England and France.'<sup>107</sup> For Beck, there was clearly no doubt that Hitler would replace every single officer—senior and junior alike—to achieve his revolutionary aims.

Hitler's concept of war was marked by his experience in the trenches during the First World War. His idea of a 'new' officer was based on the shock troop commander, the experienced infantry officer on the western front. Indeed, the vision of the Third Reich as a 'national community' was in many respects a product of the 'sworn brotherhood' of the trenches, in which distinctions between officers and men were supposedly obliterated. This ideal was the absolute antithesis of the Prussian general staff officer, a member of the aristocracy and if possible, like Walther von Brauchitsch, Beck, and the Bavarian Halder, a born artilleryman.<sup>108</sup>

This effect was heightened by the war and the steadily rising losses. The requirements for admission to the professional officer corps were relaxed, the relative number of reserve officers rose, and a new 'special commander' class was created. Even conventional officers who had no connection with the resistance realized with some concern that the nature of the army was changing, that it was more susceptible to National Socialist ideas and that professional standards were falling.<sup>109</sup> This was accompanied by the rise of the Waffen-SS which, with its more flexible systems of recruitment and promotion, mirrored the social dynamics of National Socialist society more closely and was consequently, for the purposes of Nazi ideology, a 'better army'.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 103; Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 346.

<sup>105</sup> Aly, 'Hitler's Volksstaat'; see also *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 919.

<sup>106</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 53, 553; Hamerow, *Road to the Wolf's Lair*, 219.

<sup>107</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 553.

<sup>108</sup> Knox, '1 October 1942', 813–14; on Hitler's attitude to the aristocracy, see Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche* (1951), 170; Engel, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler*, 24; Frei, 'Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?', 381.

<sup>109</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 971.

<sup>110</sup> Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 362–3.

This is not the place for a detailed account of the changes in the criteria for admission and advancement in the army officer corps.<sup>111</sup> The selection requirements gradually departed from the traditional standards of the pre-war period. The National Socialist principle of 'selection based on performance', here termed 'promotion on merit', gradually took over:<sup>112</sup> 'Officers who had shown leadership qualities in critical situations were regarded as having proved themselves adequately qualified for promotion. Conduct befitting an officer over a longer period had to be demonstrated only by those serving at home or on quiet fronts.'<sup>113</sup> Hitler himself constantly complained that the officer corps from the Weimar days had not adapted to the facts of life in National Socialist Germany.<sup>114</sup>

Up to 1941, the army officer corps was able 'to keep its traditional selection procedures largely intact',<sup>115</sup> but the pace of change accelerated after 1 October 1942, when Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant, Maj.-Gen. Rudolf Schmundt, took over at the army personnel office. Rising losses increased the pressure. For present purposes, it is not really necessary to determine how far the changes in the social structure can be attributed to external factors and how far they can be traced to ideological plans to change the face of German society in general and military society in particular.<sup>116</sup> From the point of view of critics in the armed forces, the changes in personnel represented a deliberate threat to the inner cohesion of the army.

Schmundt's appointment coincided with the appointment of a new generation of generals, designed to bring the high command into line with Hitler's ideas: 'The blitzkrieg was a thing of the past, and the generals who had led these lightning campaigns were, in Hitler's view, not the right people to conduct tough defensive action. They were accordingly replaced by younger men who, Hitler thought, were closer to him in spirit. Von Reichenau, Kluge, and Küchner, the new commanders-in-chief of Army Groups South, Centre, and North respectively, represented the middle generation of field marshals, still members of the aristocracy but willing to take a more open view of "modern times".'<sup>117</sup> This was also the period when Halder was dismissed from his post as chief of the general staff.

As ever, practical and political considerations went hand in hand. It was clear to the officers in the resistance who were members of the conservative elite that

<sup>111</sup> See in this connection the seminal work by Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, and the chapters by Kroener in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I and v/II.

<sup>112</sup> On the context of Nazi ideology, see Frei, 'Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?', 384–5.

<sup>113</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 1032.

<sup>114</sup> See Jürgen Förster on 'ideological warfare' in the present volume, 633; Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 118.

<sup>115</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 942.

<sup>116</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, more or less deliberately coined the term 'manipulation of the elite' to describe this process. Kroener gives a more functional analysis and explains the material constraints in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I and v/II. Knox, '1 October 1942', restores the ideological slant.

<sup>117</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 311.

the classic Prussian-German officer corps was increasingly being replaced by the National Socialist 'model leader'.<sup>118</sup> Officers who did not meet this criterion were simply removed. One of the first to go was Lt.-Gen. Erich Hoepner, dismissed from his post as C-in-C of the Fourth Panzer Army on 8 January 1942 for independently ordering a retreat, and subsequently dishonourably discharged from the Wehrmacht—an event without precedent in the annals of Prussian-German military history.<sup>119</sup>

In national-conservative resistance circles, the change was seen as creeping 'Bolshevization',<sup>120</sup> a term even employed with Allied contacts outside Germany,<sup>121</sup> partly no doubt to stress their own affinity with the western powers by drawing attention to the similarities between the Third Reich and Stalinism. This was not merely a matter of snobbery, as has sometimes been said. Roland von Hößlin, a newly promoted major in the prestigious 17th Cavalry Regiment in Bamberg who had been persuaded by Stauffenberg to join the conspiracy, wrote a few days after 20 July 1944 and shortly before he was arrested: 'Here I found the notice of my promotion to major waiting for me. I wasn't particularly excited, in view of the momentous events that have been taking place, but it is nevertheless a help in dealing with other agencies. Otherwise I would have to salute the civilian in charge of a garrison administration and use his full official title every time I saw him. The fact that we are now supposed to be on a level with these poofy lads is another example of the revolutionary way titles are handed out left, right, and centre, just like these crazy premature promotions.'<sup>122</sup> On the other hand Stauffenberg himself had noted the reason that, in his opinion, lay behind the deliberate changes in the manning of the officer corps and the leadership of the Reich: 'The new officer class, in the general tendency to place their own selfish interests first, in the rise of corruption and the cult of personality, represents the triumph of mediocrity.'<sup>123</sup> If it is the case that social change in the officer corps was intended to be the prerequisite for an inner transformation of the army, which would eventually be absorbed into the Nazi state and the Party's own army, the Waffen-SS,<sup>124</sup> then that was the development that Stauffenberg was determined to resist.

The Nazi leadership regarded the tendency of the traditional Wehrmacht elite to consider itself to be outside the political and moral bounds of the NS state as a latent threat. SS security service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD) reports refer

<sup>118</sup> Knox, '1 October 1942', 823.

<sup>119</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 311.

<sup>120</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 529 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>121</sup> Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 591.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from Hößlin to his father, Meiningen, 2 Aug. 1944 (copy in the author's possession).

<sup>123</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 34 (24 July 1944).

<sup>124</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 932.

repeatedly to the 'apolitical attitude' of broad sections of the officer corps. From the state's point of view, the events of 20 July 1944 proved that the officer corps was not sufficiently imbued with National Socialist ideals. The 'manipulation of the elite' had not yet been completely successful.<sup>125</sup>

The dismissal of professionally qualified officers who were capable of reaching independent conclusions was an important contributory cause in the deprofessionalization of the conduct of the war. It reflected the National Socialist conviction that 'all outstanding problems could be solved if the right man was deployed in the right place'. The 'pathological belief that anything could be achieved, given the necessary willpower',<sup>126</sup> left no room for a general staff with an elitist tradition. For that reason alone the change of military elite, whether deliberate or by force of circumstances, was contested on professional and eventually also on moral grounds. From the point of view of the national-conservative conspirators, the change also showed that the regime was determined to bend German society to its will after the war. Resistance, coup d'état, and assassination were seen as an attempt to forestall this while it was still possible to do so.<sup>127</sup>

An examination of the military grounds for resistance shows that the original, purely professional motives developed in the course of time into a driving force based initially on political and ultimately on moral principles. Any analysis confined to purely technical motives would suggest that the members of the military opposition were merely a bunch of malcontents who refused to recognize the potential power of National Socialism to transform and modernize society.<sup>128</sup> This applied, so it was said, to the creation of a 'modern' high command structure, with the Luftwaffe as an independent service within the Wehrmacht, to a 'modern' personnel management system, and to the social opening up of leading positions in the state hierarchy. But Beck, Tresckow, Stauffenberg, and their fellow-conspirators saw clearly that, behind all this apparent modernization, the moral basis of the state and society was being undermined. They foresaw the end of the army, which for them represented a moral value in itself, and they realized that these aspects of the National Socialist conduct of the war would inevitably lead to disaster. They knew that Germany could not sustain a war fought on these terms, and that every day it continued cost the country sacrifices that could not be justified.

<sup>125</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 273–4 (20 Aug. 1944), 485 (8 Nov. 1944), 525 (15 Dec. 1944); on the 'manipulation of the elite', see Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 303–48.

<sup>126</sup> Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung', 419, where the quotation occurs.

<sup>127</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 529 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>128</sup> It is impossible to consider the modernization introduced by National Socialism in greater detail here. See Frei, 'Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?', and Mommsen, 'Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung'.

#### 4. THE DEPLETION OF THE REICH'S RESOURCES IN MEN AND MATERIEL

Nowhere were the constant and excessive demands on the Reich's resources in men and materiel more apparent than in the department responsible for the 'management of human resources' and the supply of equipment, at the interface between military and civilian society, that is to say in the offices of the commander of the replacement army, who was also head of army equipment.

Beck had predicted in 1938 that a war would mean the end of Germany, but this view was based on the assumption that the Wehrmacht would inevitably be defeated in very short order if it had to fight on more than one front. But even Beck had not given much thought to the question of Germany's resources in men and matériel in the longer term, a question that would be crucial in a long war. Manpower, as a factor that might limit further operations, first came to the fore when German losses suddenly shot up, coinciding with the attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.<sup>129</sup> By the winter of 1941/2, the commander of the replacement army had recognized the need to work towards ending the war by negotiation.<sup>130</sup> Hitler had ruled out all rational solutions to the incipient shortage of manpower on ideological and propaganda grounds,<sup>131</sup> so the only remaining expedient was to form divisions quickly from the reserves of the replacement army and deploy them without delay on the eastern front—under the code name 'VALKYRIE', to be followed shortly thereafter by 'VALKYRIE II'.<sup>132</sup> The admission requirements for officers were relaxed on ideological and practical grounds and the period of training was cut, but neither of these measures made good the shortfall in numbers and quality.

In the winter before the battle of Stalingrad, it was widely realized in the Wehrmacht that in view of the extremely high losses, especially among officers, the war could not now be won,<sup>133</sup> although the Wehrmacht high command and Hitler himself largely rejected this position.<sup>134</sup> By this time, it could no longer be assumed that losses would decline as the war went on, and that this would be a decisive factor in bringing operations to a successful conclusion: 'Projected over a whole year, it was estimated that losses on the eastern front alone would exceed the available replacements.'<sup>135</sup> The defeat before Moscow, followed by the steady rise in the number of men lost through death, injury, or capture, increased the readiness among the armed forces to consider resistance. The glaring errors in leadership had particularly disastrous consequences on the eastern front, and the military commanders on that front were therefore more quickly persuaded to move against Hitler. In this case,

<sup>129</sup> According to Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 304, there were 'very substantial losses . . . from the very first month'. <sup>130</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 1000.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, v/II. 886.

<sup>132</sup> Rathke, '"Walküre"-Divisionen'; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 944, 1021, 1059.

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 446.

<sup>134</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 878.

<sup>135</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 305-6.



direct experience of the amateurish conduct of the war was accompanied by insight into the profoundly criminal nature of the regime.<sup>136</sup>

In the summer of 1942, the organization department of the OKH was obliged to inform the OKW that the army on the eastern front would be approximately 750,000 under strength by the end of the year. The problem was exacerbated by the formation of further Luftwaffe field divisions on the orders of Hitler and Göring.<sup>137</sup> The figures spoke for themselves, so officers could talk about losses and replacements without arousing suspicion. The subject was discussed quite openly in the organization department of the army high command, and general staff officers Ulrich de Maizière and Robert Bernardis produced a detailed study of the statistics.<sup>138</sup> Lt.-Col. Graf Stauffenberg, on the general staff and heading a section in the organization department, confided to his old colleague Capt. Joachim Kuhn (also on the general staff) that 'from the moment we made the mistake of attacking Russia, it was clear that Germany had neither the men nor the materiel required to prosecute the war even with the best leadership in the world'.<sup>139</sup>

The organization department was nevertheless at pains, if not to produce solutions then at least to provide some relief so far as it could. One measure—now unavoidable despite the ideological objections—was to employ Russian 'auxiliaries' in the Wehrmacht behind the lines<sup>140</sup> so as to release German troops for front-line duties. Another was to separate the replacement units from the training units. Replacement personnel were still to be stationed on Reich territory, but training was to be shifted to the occupied territories where training units could replace units previously allocated to occupation duties. The result was a heightened security risk, attributable in particular to the reduced army presence on Reich territory, and increasingly high losses suffered by inadequately trained troops in encounters with partisans.<sup>141</sup>

Hitler and his entourage were gripped by panic for the first time in the great winter crisis of 1942/3. The memorandum from the commander of the replacement army, quoted earlier, with its call for a change in the high command, falls within this period.<sup>142</sup> The alternative proposed by the general responsible for supplying the Wehrmacht with replacements in men and materiel was entirely within the parameters of the system, and was not an expression of military resistance; it was nevertheless important in many respects for the military resistance later in the war. Hitler's rejection of the memorandum made it clear that the dictator was not disposed, even in the light of the military crisis, to

<sup>136</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 359.

<sup>137</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 881, 891.

<sup>138</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 79.

<sup>139</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 378.

<sup>140</sup> See, in this connection, Bernard Chiari in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, v/I. 1027–9 and v/II. 885, 890, 895–6, 1030.

<sup>142</sup> [General der Kavallerie] Carl-Erik Köhler and [Generalmajor a.D.] Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041dd [1950], BA-MA, Za 1/1932, fo. 216; Mueller, 'Friedrich Fromm', 74; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 880.



agree to practical proposals for a rational conduct of the war. Hitler was not badly advised, as it has sometimes been claimed; he himself was the nub of the problem. Stauffenberg now said: 'It is quite clear to me that, fundamentally, the cause lies in the character of the Führer and in National Socialism.'<sup>143</sup> And in the winter of 1942/3, this brilliant general staff officer concluded, 'The point is not to tell him the truth, but to put an end to him.'<sup>144</sup>

The result of Fromm's 'defeatist' attitude was that the commander of the replacement army was now 'cut out of the loop'. However, he was not dismissed, as his indisputable professional qualifications appeared to make him irreplaceable. Instead, Himmler, the SS, and the Party gained ever more control over the business of supplying replacements in men and materiel of vital importance to the army; here too, the process of 'curtailing the powers of the traditional elites' was apparent.<sup>145</sup> Another aspect was also to prove significant: Fromm was no longer welcome at the Führer's headquarters. If he needed to put something to Hitler in the line of duty, he generally sent a representative—usually his chief of staff, who thus had frequent access to Hitler.

German losses had not yet reached their peak at this point. Stalingrad, Tunis, and—in summer 1943—Kursk brought a further drastic rise and 'the discrepancies between supposed and actual strength grew even wider'.<sup>146</sup> At the beginning of September 1943, the head of the General Army Office, Gen. Friedrich Olbricht, reported that only 75 per cent of the 800,000 reinforcements promised after Stalingrad had arrived, with the result that 200,000 posts had not been filled.<sup>147</sup> In the case of Lt.-Gen. Fritz Lindemann, artillery general to the chief of the army general staff, the experience of the excessive depletion of his forces and the failure to supply replacements in his advance position as divisional commander on the eastern front were the decisive factors that prompted him to join the conspiracy.<sup>148</sup>

The question of losses, perhaps even more than that of the command structure, was at first an innocuous topic of conversation among officers. The regime did all it could to keep the figures under wraps but the trend, namely that Germany would eventually not have the manpower to prosecute the war, must have been common knowledge among officers on the general staff.<sup>149</sup> Stauffenberg's friend and fellow-officer Peter Sauerbruch reports a long and detailed conversation on the subject in which Stauffenberg at first suggested various organizational solutions (unifying the military organization, i.e. extending the changes in the high command, and curtailing the power of

<sup>143</sup> Stauffenberg in conversation with Kuhn at Winniza in August 1942: Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 378.

<sup>144</sup> Kramarz, *Stauffenberg*, 106; also cited in Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 217.

<sup>145</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II, 905; see also 880, 906, 1067.

<sup>146</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 309.

<sup>147</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II, 1023.

<sup>148</sup> Welkerling, 'General der Artillerie Fritz Lindemann', 112.

<sup>149</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 302.

the SS particularly in connection with personnel replacement) but then, in view of the fact that the war was irretrievably lost, backed a 'complete break' with the current regime.<sup>150</sup>

By the summer of 1944, the situation had deteriorated even further, losses continued to rise, and recruitment to fall. Also, as the occupied territories were lost, so too was the possibility of recruiting replacements there.<sup>151</sup> There was no alternative but to call up younger and younger boys and older and older men. In the summer of 1944, the vast majority of replacements were 'very young' recruits—not an inexhaustible source of supply.<sup>152</sup>

Since Hitler apparently refused to believe what the facts and figures clearly demonstrated,<sup>153</sup> officers who understood the situation were impelled by the reckless exploitation of the Reich's resources in men (and matériel) to go to any lengths to bring the war to an end. It was quite literally—as Beck had astutely observed in 1938—a matter of 'the nation's survival',<sup>154</sup> and that in quite basic demographic terms. On the day of the coup, Stauffenberg noted: 'If we continue on the present course, defeat and the annihilation of the nation's flesh and blood are inevitable.'<sup>155</sup> Nowhere were the depressing figures more clearly noted than in the office of the commander of the replacement army. Once again, it is no surprise that it should have been at the centre of the movement for a coup.<sup>156</sup>

Within the ranks of the national-conservative resistance, there was much debate as to whether it was preferable to cut short the agony of Nazi rule and live with the 'stab in the back' legend that the regime had been betrayed, or to make the essential bankruptcy of the system clear by leaving it in power until it came to an end of its own accord. Members of the Kreisau circle were inclined to plan for the period after the regime collapsed, as it clearly must, and for a long time they refused on principle to intervene before it did so. However, the enormous losses suffered by the Wehrmacht forced officers who felt responsible for 'the army's survival' to realize that something must be done to stop the slaughter. By the summer of 1944 the army on the eastern front was losing on average the equivalent of an entire regiment every day, but losses on the same front in the third quarter of 1944 amounted to three regiments a day. With the collapse of Army Group Centre—foreseen by Stauffenberg—total Wehrmacht losses shot up to 215,013 killed in July and 348,960 in August 1944 (the second highest in the whole war, exceeded only by the record figure

<sup>150</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 402 (18 Sept. 1944).

<sup>151</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1051, 1061–2; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 218.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 308.

<sup>152</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 223.

<sup>154</sup> Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 276.

<sup>155</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 34 (24 July 1944); Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 125.

<sup>156</sup> [General der Kavallerie] Carl-Erik Köhler and [Generalmajor a.D.] Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041dd [1950], BA-MA, Za 1/1932, fo. 234; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1066.

of 451,742 killed in January 1945).<sup>157</sup> Some 60,000 German civilians lost their lives in the Allied air raids in the final phase of the war. Altogether, as many people lost their lives between 20 July 1944 and the end of the war as in all the preceding—almost five—years of the war put together; lives that might well have been saved, had the coup succeeded.<sup>158</sup>

The office of the commander of the replacement army bore the brunt of the irrational division of responsibility for the Reich's conduct of the war, characteristic of National Socialism, and the fact that the Reich's resources were being overstretched to meet the needs of a war there was now no prospect of winning,<sup>159</sup> while the army general staff was primarily affected by the amateurish notions of their self-appointed commander, Hitler. Fromm had already succeeded in making himself personally 'unacceptable' to Hitler in 1942. That may explain why, on the evening of 20 July 1944, everyone at Führer headquarters attributed the Berlin putsch entirely to him. Fromm's dismissal and replacement by Himmler was the result of the natural assumption that his chief of staff, Stauffenberg, must have been acting on the general's orders when he planted the bomb.

The civilian members of the conspiracy, like their military counterparts, had good reason on the basis of their political and professional experience to take action against amateurish and irrational structures. National-conservative resistance was a revolt against 'the cult of personality',<sup>160</sup> and also against the diplomatic isolation of the Reich, which prevented any political move to end the war. To that extent, therefore, the motives of the two groups, which were gradually coming together, coincided.

Hitler's policy was perceived in national-conservative circles, both civilian and military, as a crime against the German people. Stauffenberg, when he was serving in the organization department of the army general staff in 1942, had already said of Hitler: 'He is a fool and a criminal'<sup>161</sup>—a remarkable combination. With the realization that the pursuit of a policy of war was 'a major crime against the German people',<sup>162</sup> practical motives were gradually replaced by moral ones. This took time, and not everyone counted as in the conspirators' entourage had progressed that far when the day of the attempted coup finally came.

<sup>157</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 238, 279.

<sup>158</sup> Wette, 'Zwischen Untergangspathos und Überlebenswillen', 9–10.

<sup>159</sup> There is still no comprehensive biography of Fromm; see, in particular, Mueller, 'Friedrich Fromm', and Kroener, 'Friedrich Fromm'.

<sup>160</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 34 (24 July 1944), 325–8 (letter from Kaltenbrunner to Bormann, 30 Aug. 1944).

<sup>161</sup> IfZ, ED 88, coll. Zeller, 2, 353.  
<sup>162</sup> Wette, 'Zwischen Untergangspathos und Überlebenswillen', 13, probably after Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 84–5.

### III. The War as Crime

IN addition to recognizing that the Reich's conduct of the war constituted a 'crime against the German people', the conspirators also realized—though in varying degrees—that it included a crime of monstrous and unimaginable proportions against the people in the territories occupied by the Wehrmacht. It was some time before even members of the resistance realized that the regime was engaged in a criminal campaign within the country. Similarly, not all the conspirators were equally quick to see that the whole of the war conducted by the Wehrmacht was serving criminal ends, as was particularly true of the war against the Soviet Union.

#### I. THE TREATMENT OF THE 'LIBERATED' PEOPLES

Here too, there is clearly a close connection between efforts to improve efficiency in the Wehrmacht within the parameters of the system, and recognition of the criminal nature of the war. The war against the Soviet Union was widely perceived in Germany as part of a battle with Communism; the aims of National Socialism were very largely identical with those of the national-conservatives. However, a distinction was drawn in the crusade against the 'Bolshevik' system between the 'Russian people' and the political system in the Soviet Union. This applied equally to many who opposed Hitler.<sup>1</sup>

It would therefore have been consistent with the drive to increase military efficiency to win the people in the conquered territories over to the German cause, and if possible to get them to fight alongside the Germans in the campaign against the Stalinist Soviet Union. However, at the time of the partition of Poland Hitler paid little attention to military plans to involve foreign nationalities but handed the Abwehr-trained members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Orhanizacij Ukraïnskych Nacionalistiv, OUN) over to the advancing Soviet forces.<sup>2</sup> And even after Operation BARBAROSSA was launched, the idea of involving anti-Bolshevik Russians in the German war effort was completely foreign to National Socialist policy. Hitler's real aim in going to war was not to fight 'Bolshevism' but to gain *Lebensraum*, 'living space', and to exterminate entire races. It would have been contrary to that aim to treat people in the conquered territories humanely or, equally, to arm Russian prisoners of war.<sup>3</sup> Diplomats like Ulrich von Hassell and Friedrich Werner Graf von der Schulenberg, and military men like Tresckow and later Stauffenberg, were in favour of close involvement with pro-German, anti-Communist circles in these territories for the purposes of the German

<sup>1</sup> Ueberschär, 'Zum "Rußlandbild"', 71–2, 74.

<sup>2</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 142.

<sup>3</sup> Hoffmann, *Ostlegionen*, 15–16; see also Graml, 'Die Wehrmacht', 381.

campaigns.<sup>4</sup> The widespread slaughter that started immediately as the Germans advanced was counterproductive. This was recorded by Army Group Centre, where Tresckow was serving as 1st general staff officer: 'An effective propaganda campaign . . . to persuade Russians to collaborate in the German interest cannot be mounted unless there is change in the principles prevailing at present.'<sup>5</sup>

In the eyes of many, particularly the conspirators, this development was objectionable in two respects. First, it inevitably undermined the troops' sense of morality and decency, or respect for 'the full majesty of the law' as the leading civilian conspirator, Carl Goerdeler, was later to put it. Second, it alienated the Belorussians and the Russian people even more, and eventually drove them to join the partisans.<sup>6</sup> The head of Amt Ausland/Abwehr (the OKW foreign intelligence office), Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, is on record as saying during the interrogations conducted by the Gestapo after 20 July 1944 that it was generally considered that 'the SS disrupted the process of pacification'.<sup>7</sup> In August 1941, a senior army commander like Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, who had got himself talked about early in the campaign by demanding strong action against the resident Jewish population,<sup>8</sup> was already insisting in an address to Army Group South that the Russians in the conquered territories must be informed of the long-term political prospects: 'the Russian people, if they are to assist of their own volition in bringing the war to an end, must know what Germany intends to do with Russia'; he therefore called for appropriate treatment and care of the civilian population in the occupied territories.<sup>9</sup>

Hitler, on the contrary, blocked any such policy. For him, winning *Lebensraum* in the east meant effectively emptying the conquered territories of people and bringing in German settlers.<sup>10</sup> Gersdorff, who as intelligence officer in Army Group Centre under Tresckow was responsible for the campaign against the partisans in Belorussia, set out the military conspirators' position on the subject in the following terms: 'Hitler's Ostpolitik vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the occupied territories laid the foundations for a patriotic struggle on the part of the Russian people against the German conqueror, and this led not only to heavy troop losses but also to growing supply problems.'<sup>11</sup> Such observations took no account of the ethical aspect of the crimes inextricably linked with the campaign against the partisans. In dealing with the people

<sup>4</sup> Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 13; Ueberschär, 'Zum "Rußlandbild"', 77.

<sup>5</sup> H.Gr. Mitte Ib No. 2562/41 geh. to OKH/GenStdH/GenQU, Prisoners of war, position at 7 Dec. 1941, BA-MA, RH 19 II/127, Bl. 139-40.

<sup>6</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 88, 93, 102-3; on the latter aspect, see Bernhard Chiari in *Germany and the Second World War*, ix/II.

<sup>7</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 425 (29 Sept. 1944).

<sup>8</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 1199-201; also Stahl, 'General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel', 242.

<sup>9</sup> BA-MA, RH 20/17-280, citing Stahl, 'General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel', 243.

<sup>10</sup> Mommsen, 'Umwolungspläne'; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 1236-7.

<sup>11</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 102-3.

in the occupied territories, it was essential to reinforce the battle against the Soviet Union in two ways: first, they must not be needlessly driven into the arms of the partisans and, second, they should be regarded—although they were prisoners of war who had fallen into German hands—as potential recruits to the military forces of the Reich.

At first, the Wehrmacht exploited the manpower potential of the conquered Russian territories by recruiting 'auxiliaries', who might account for as much as 20 per cent of the entire force comprising the German divisions.<sup>12</sup> Soon, however, it began to form Cossack 'centuries'—independent units recruited among the local population—to secure the enormous and largely deserted areas behind the lines.<sup>13</sup> The German advance into the southern part of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1942 brought opportunities to recruit among the non-Slav peoples of the vast Soviet empire. The distinction was an important one, as there were fundamental objections on racial grounds to the idea of arming 'subhuman' Slavs.<sup>14</sup> Hitler was nevertheless apparently prepared to set these objections aside for the moment, in view of the Wehrmacht's increasingly desperate need for more men.<sup>15</sup>

During his time in the organization department of the army general staff, Stauffenberg was responsible for the structure of the high command and the command structures of the army in the field, the organization of supply- and auxiliary troops, and the organizational oversight of the army and army group rear areas; as such, he was the driving force behind the establishment of the 'Ostruppen' or eastern troop units.<sup>16</sup> While the Waffen-SS exploited the manpower resources of the Baltic states, Stauffenberg was concerned to keep the Slav peoples, rejected by the SS on racist grounds, exclusively for the Wehrmacht. However, it very soon became clear that these potential allies could not be expected to show any genuine commitment to Germany's war aims unless they received some political assurances, notably with regard to the future ownership of the land, assurances which the Nazi regime was by no means prepared to give: 'If you can solve the land problem, the Russian people is yours.'<sup>17</sup> Stauffenberg made the point to Kuhn: 'The daily staff reports on the German civil administration's treatment of the people, the lack of political objectives for the occupied countries, the treatment of the Jews, all show that Hitler's claims that he was fighting the war to establish a new order in Europe are false. This war is a monstrous aberration.'<sup>18</sup> The topic was pursued in the frequently cited six-page memorandum that Stauffenberg had with him on

<sup>12</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 896.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffmann, *Ostlegionen*, 54–5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 23–4; Graml, 'Die Wehrmacht', 381.

<sup>15</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1055–6, and v/I. 1027.

<sup>16</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 76; Hoffmann, *Ostlegionen*, 51; Seidt, *Berlin, Kabul, Moskau*, 331.

<sup>17</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 246–8.

<sup>18</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 378; similar statement by Stauffenberg in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 249; Ueberschär, 'Zum "Rußlandbild"', 79.

20 July 1944: 'One reason why the overall situation is so bad is the way the occupied countries are treated. The beginning of the end of the entire military operation is the Russian campaign, which started by ordering all commissars to be put to death and went on to allow prisoners of war to starve and man-hunts to be organized to get hold of civilian workers.'<sup>19</sup>

For Stauffenberg, Tresckow, and Gersdorff, there was no contradiction between their plan to form foreign units to support the German war effort, and their secret battle against the NS regime.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, like most national-conservative conspirators they considered that a war against 'Bolshevism' was not in principle reprehensible. However, in the matter of the 'Osttruppen' it became increasingly clear to them that that was not what Hitler was interested in. For the conspirators, the criminal nature of the war lay in the fact that it was not really being fought for the purpose Hitler claimed to be pursuing.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. THE REALIZATION THAT THIS WAS A WAR OF EXTERMINATION

The connections between Hitler's war aims and the treatment of the people in the conquered territories were by no means equally clear to all the troops, not even on the eastern front. But for many members of the German forces, the criminal conduct of the war was plainly visible on the ground, and for some (a few) it was the reason why they joined the conspiracy. In speaking with members of the high command, Hitler had made no secret of the fact that his wars were to be wars of extermination, not subject to the normal rules.<sup>22</sup> A number of officers were shocked by the actions of the SS in Poland in 1939, notably the commander-in-chief of the Eighth Army, Lt.-Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz, who protested against the indiscriminate killing of Jews and members of the Polish elite.<sup>23</sup> The protest had no effect, however, because the army high command and the commander-in-chief, Brauchitsch, were well aware that these measures were not mistakes on the part of a few undisciplined police, SS, or SD units,<sup>24</sup> but were exactly what Hitler wanted. If Blaskowitz called on all the generals to intercede with the Führer, it would end in a trial of strength with Hitler, who was hoping to fulfil a 'life-long ambition' with this 'ethnic cleansing' operation in the conquered territories.<sup>25</sup> And a trial of strength was something Brauchitsch was not prepared to contemplate. On the contrary, in

<sup>19</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 34 (24 July 1944).

<sup>20</sup> For a different view, see Messerschmidt, 'Motive', 113.

<sup>21</sup> Mommsen, 'Die moralische Wiederherstellung der Nation', 15; Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 985.

<sup>22</sup> Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 273.

<sup>23</sup> Ludewig, 'Blaskowitz', 12-14; IfZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, 94.

<sup>24</sup> Leeb, *Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 473.

<sup>25</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 115-16; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 58.



a decree on 'the army and the SS' issued on 7 February 1940, the army commander-in-chief called on his men to show 'understanding' for the measures within the framework of the 'necessary solution of ethnic problems, a solution ordered by the Führer'.<sup>26</sup>

For Blaskowitz himself, his protest meant that he was the only lieutenant-general serving in the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1940 who was not promoted to the rank of field marshal, and who ended the war with the same rank he had held when it began. The executive power accorded to the army by right as an army of occupation, and with it the responsibility for dealing with the people, was withdrawn.<sup>27</sup> One thing was clear: protest against the crimes committed by Germans in the occupied territories was not welcome. Hitler, on being informed of Blaskowitz's attitude, is reported to have been furious and to have said, 'you can't run a war on Salvation Army lines'.<sup>28</sup> The lieutenant-general's attitude was not in any sense an expression of resistance; on the contrary, it was an attempt within the parameters of the system to stop abuses in the general path of duty, and as such very much like Beck's move a year earlier. When Beck and Goerdeler brought in the aged Field Marshal August von Mackensen, who approached Brauchitsch with a handwritten protest, it was likewise done without any intention of undermining the system.<sup>29</sup> But they were striking at the very essence of the Nazi regime: the crimes they complained of were part and parcel of Nazi ideology, though very few people realized it at the time.

The process of conspiracy in the Amt Ausland/Abwehr, the Reich's military intelligence service, was more carefully planned. The head of the central section, Col. Hans Oster, issued instructions that all incoming reports of crimes in the occupied territories were to be documented—a task he entrusted to his special administrative officer, Hans von Dohnanyi.<sup>30</sup> It had already been learned early in September that Reinhard Heydrich, head of the rival SD intelligence service, had said that 'aristocrats, priests, and Jews must be killed' and Lt.-Gen. Halder had confided to Lt.-Col. Groscurth of the general staff that 'the Führer and Göring intended to destroy the Polish nation and exterminate the Polish people'.<sup>31</sup>

There was little sympathy among members of the residual opposition for this attempt by the army high command to avoid any 'blot on the army's escutcheon'.<sup>32</sup> But even men lower down in the hierarchy, who at this early

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 356.

<sup>27</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I, 58–61.

<sup>28</sup> Stahl, 'Blaskowitz', 22–3.

<sup>29</sup> Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 12; Schwarzmüller, *Generalfeldmarschall August von Mackensen*, 370–2.

<sup>30</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 94; Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 12; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 430–1 (2 Oct. 1944); and more recently Bottlenberg-Landsberg, *Karl Ludwig Freiherr von und zu Guttenberg*, 169–85.

<sup>31</sup> Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers*, 201.

<sup>32</sup> Ludewig, 'Blaskowitz', 13; Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 60.

stage were very far from joining any resistance group, were shocked by the atrocities. After seeing the ruins in Warsaw, Stieff for example wrote to his wife: 'I am ashamed to be German.'<sup>33</sup> If anyone in the upper echelons of the Wehrmacht high command still harboured any doubts as to who was ultimately behind the killings, their doubts were dispelled by Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, who explained in the course of a speech in Koblenz in March 1940: 'I never do anything that the Führer does not know about.'<sup>34</sup>

The iniquitous nature of the war against the Soviet Union must have become absolutely clear to the troops when they learned of the 'decree on the exercise of martial law in the BARBAROSSA area, and on special measures to be taken by the troops', issued on 13 May 1941, and the OKW 'Guidelines on the treatment of political commissars', published on 6 June 1941.<sup>35</sup> Under the decree on jurisdiction in time of war, members of the German forces were not liable to prosecution for crimes committed in Russia, with the result that the local people were fair game, and under the 'commissar order' any commissars in the Soviet forces who fell into German hands were to be shot. Both these orders were clearly in breach of international law. After protests from some of his officers, the commander-in-chief of the army added some explanatory notes to the decree on jurisdiction, restricting its scope, but it nevertheless remained in force.<sup>36</sup> The fact that the upper echelons of the army accepted these orders more or less without demur strengthened the few remaining critics in their rejection of Hitler's policy. This was the case with Tresckow, Oster, and Groscurth.<sup>37</sup> But in many other cases, including a number of military men who eventually backed the conspiracy, the criminal orders met with little opposition.

Any stirrings of criticism were often directed in the first place at the effects the orders in question had on the unity and morale of the troops. Blaskowitz noted: 'The worst damage that the German people will suffer as a result of this situation is the gross brutalization and moral depravity that will spread like a plague among decent German men.'<sup>38</sup> Thus, some officers were more repelled by the lack of discipline and restraint shown in the killings than by the 'ethnic cleansing' itself, and this explains why some of the officers subsequently

<sup>33</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 343; Stieff, *Briefe* (no. 63 of 21 Nov. 1939).

<sup>34</sup> Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, 105; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 97.

<sup>35</sup> On the subject of these 'criminal orders', see *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 496–513.

<sup>36</sup> ObdH Gen. zbV ObdH (Gr. RWes) No. 80/41 g.Kdos. Chfs., Behandlung feindlicher Zivilpersonen . . . , 24 May 1941, BA-MA, RH 22/155, fos. 302–3; decree of 13 May 1941 on military jurisdiction and special military measures, BA-MA, RH 22/155, fos. 304–6; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 302–3.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffmann, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 122.

<sup>38</sup> Cited from Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 96.

executed for their part in the conspiracy, including the quartermaster general, Wagner, or the commander of Panzer Group 4, Hoepner, had no compunction about executing or at least passing on the 'criminal orders' or defining the duties of the *Einsatzgruppen*.<sup>39</sup> Hoepner himself put it like this in May 1941: 'The war against Russia is an essential part of the German nation's struggle for survival. It is the old battle of the Germans against the Slavs, the defence of European culture against the overwhelming tide of Muscovites and Asiatics, defenders of Jewish Bolshevism. The objective is to smash Russia and the battle must therefore be fought with unexampled ferocity . . . Above all, those who uphold the Russian-Bolshevik system must not be spared.'<sup>40</sup>

Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, senior administrative officer and a lieutenant-colonel on the economic staff East at OKW, stated under interrogation by the Gestapo that 'the extermination measures against the Jews, going beyond the Nuremberg laws, and the actions in the occupied territories, some of which we had exposed', had alienated him from the Nazi regime—albeit only the extermination measures that went beyond the Nuremberg laws.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, many civilian conspirators were entirely in sympathy with some of the anti-Semitic claims, and were critical of the events of 'Reichskristallnacht', the Night of Broken Glass, on 9 November 1938, primarily because they considered them to be 'plebeian'.<sup>42</sup> Again and again, the crux of the charges is that the acts committed by Germans—whether in the Wehrmacht or the SS—broke a traditional code of honour. When Maj. Carl Hans Graf von Hardenberg witnessed a massacre of inhabitants of the Jewish ghetto carried out by Latvian SS units near the Belorussian town of Borisov on the Berezina in August 1941, he 'and Bock's personal aide-de-camp, Lt. Heinrich Graf von Lehndorff, were determined to defend their honour as officers'<sup>43</sup>—their honour, not the lives of the victims. When Gersdorff recorded in the campaign diary his protest against the killings behind Army Group Centre lines in December 1941, he expressed himself in much the same terms: 'The executions are regarded as a stain on the honour of the German army in general and the German officer corps in particular.'<sup>44</sup> Stauffenberg appears to have had similar thoughts: 'We heard through Stauffenberg of events in the area behind the lines that were offensive to a soldier's sense of decency, and contrary to the moral code and the rules of international law.'<sup>45</sup> Goerdeler took up the idea in the draft of his first official statement: 'We deem it a deep dishonour to Germany's good name that crimes of all kinds have been committed in the occupied territories

<sup>39</sup> Peter, 'General der Artillerie Eduard Wagner', 263–5; Messerschmidt, 'Motive', 112.

<sup>40</sup> Cited from Mitcham and Mueller, 'Generaloberst Erich Hoepner', 95.

<sup>41</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 110 (31 July 1944).

<sup>42</sup> Mommsen, 'Moralische Wiederherstellung', 15.

<sup>43</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 427.

<sup>44</sup> Report by Maj. Freiherr von Gersdorff, 9 Dec. 1941, BA-MA, RH 19 II/127, fos. 171–3.

<sup>45</sup> Maizière, *In der Pflicht*, 82.

behind the backs of the troops engaged in battle, exploiting the protection they provide. This sullies the honour of the dead.'<sup>46</sup>

Capt. Axel Freiherr von dem Bussche, who served with Tresckow in the 9th Potsdam infantry regiment, was present at a mass execution at Dubno in the Ukraine in October 1942, an event that decided him to join the conspiracy.<sup>47</sup> But the real reason for the shift from opposition to resistance was not merely the knowledge of isolated crimes, which could be regarded as disagreeable collateral effects of the war. It was the realization that 'since 1941, if not earlier, there had been an indissoluble link in the dictator's mind between war and genocide'.<sup>48</sup> Not all officers were fully aware of this; here too the gradual nature of the progress towards resistance is apparent. Tresckow, for example, perhaps the most resolute of the conspirators at a very early stage, drew the correct conclusions from the 'criminal orders' issued in the spring of 1941.<sup>49</sup> In the winter crisis of 1941, despite protests from Army Group Centre, more and more trainloads of Jews were deported into their area, but all protests that the available transport was urgently needed for supplies fell on deaf ears.<sup>50</sup> For Hitler and his accomplices, racial ideology and extermination were clearly more important than military considerations in the conduct of the war. Similarly, a cousin of Stauffenberg's, Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker, became convinced of the essentially iniquitous nature of the war and the regime in the course of long talks with Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, who had just returned from the eastern front.<sup>51</sup> However, the realization that crimes were being committed did not lead in every case to the radical step of resistance. For example, Col.-Gen. Gottfried von Heinrici compared the atrocities of the war in the east with the horrors of the Thirty Years War, but drew no conclusions with regard to his own attitude or conduct.<sup>52</sup>

From Hitler's point of view, it did not really matter whether the conduct of the war was professional or unprofessional, so long as it created the conditions for a National Socialist revolution in Europe. Which, as the Wehrmacht was well aware, included a National Socialist revolution in Germany. As Hitler told the Wehrmacht high command in November 1939, 'war means

<sup>46</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 149 (5 Aug. 1944); on this subject, see also Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 122.

<sup>47</sup> Dönhoff, 'Axel von dem Bussche', 32; Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 351; Klaus, 'Preußische Soldatentradition', 542; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> See, to this effect, Wegner, 'Hitler', 506-7; also Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 480; Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 62-3; Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 984-5, and Tobias Jersak in the present volume.

<sup>49</sup> Aretin, 'Henning von Tresckow', 297-8.

<sup>50</sup> KTB No. 1 of H.Gr. Mitte, v, 31 Oct.-20 Nov. 1941, here 14 and 15 Nov. 1942, BA-MA, RH 19 II/387, fos. 63-4, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 80; for a different assessment, see also Heine-mann, 'Widerstand als Lernprozeß'.

<sup>52</sup> Wentker, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler', 18-19.

war on the home front too'.<sup>53</sup> No one who took part in the war could honestly claim to be entirely blameless.<sup>54</sup> On the contrary: Stieff was already writing to his wife in 1941 and 1942: 'We all carry such a heavy burden of guilt—for we are all partly responsible—that I regard the punishment that is now being inflicted on us as a just atonement for all the shameful deeds we Germans have committed or tolerated in the past few years.'<sup>55</sup> Stieff's view was shared, for example, by Col. Wilhelm Staehle, who said in conversation with Beck, Goerdeler, and Oster that 'he was almost ashamed to wear the uniform of a German officer'.<sup>56</sup>

The resistance may have taken a position that was 'diametrically opposed to Hitler's racially motivated war of extermination',<sup>57</sup> but it was not diametrically opposed to war as such, or to war against the Stalinist Soviet Union. There was however growing resistance against using the war to commit crimes against the German people and against people of other nations. The mass crimes, fruits of an unintended complicity between Hitler and the German people, made it impossible to end the war without changing the system. There was no chance of peace with Hitler at the helm, and the Germans had no alternative but to rally behind their 'leader'. The removal of the dictator and mass murderer was therefore imperative. It was precisely because of the crimes that had been committed that the conspirators were prepared to lay down their lives: 'Only death can release me from this mob of gangsters.'<sup>58</sup>

### 3. WAR CRIMES AND RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES

#### (a) Criminal Orders

The war in the east was at once a criminal war designed to achieve Hitler's aims and a war against the Soviet Union. For the conspirators who were officers, this meant continuing to conduct the 'military' campaign in order to secure the diplomatic objectives of the resistance and as a matter of personal conviction, even if it was virtually impossible to separate that campaign from the 'genocidal' crusade. Thus, particularly in the case of the group of conspirators that had formed among the staff of Army Group Centre, these officers were inextricably involved in the war of extermination. It is therefore necessary to examine the role of leading conspirators in the racial and ideological war of extermination.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 176, with reference to IMT, xxvi. 327–36.

<sup>54</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 340; Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 274.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to his wife, 10 Jan. 1942, reproduced in Stieff, 'Ausgewählte Briefe', 304.

<sup>56</sup> Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 64.

<sup>57</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 359.

<sup>58</sup> Nikolaus Graf Üxküll, an uncle of Stauffenberg's, cited in Graml, 'Militärische Widerstand', 96.

<sup>59</sup> Seminal works on the subject: *Germany and the Second World War*, iv; Streit, *Keine Kameraden* (1978); more recently, Gerlach, 'Männer des 20. Juli'; Heinemann, 'Widerstand'; Gerlach, 'Hitlergegner'.

The effect that the decree on jurisdiction had on Tresckow and a few like-minded officers on the staff of Army Group Centre has already been described. Speaking to his close friend Gersdorff about the moral aspect of these orders, he said—if Gersdorff's post-war account is to be believed—'Gersdorff, if we do not succeed in persuading the field marshal to fly to Berlin at once and persuade Hitler to cancel these orders, the German people will be blamed for deeds that the world will not forget for hundreds of years. Hitler, Himmler, Göring, and co. will not be the only ones to be blamed; you and I, your wife and my wife, your children and my children, will also be held responsible.'<sup>60</sup> It is typical of Tresckow's confession that his first reaction was entirely within the parameters of the system: he challenged his commander-in-chief, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, to get the orders rescinded by appealing to Hitler, alone or with the C-in-Cs of the other army groups. Not surprisingly, Bock's lukewarm intervention—he merely dispatched Maj. von Gersdorff to convey his protest to Berlin—achieved absolutely nothing.<sup>61</sup> The only result was that, despite substantive objections, the 'commissar order' issued soon after was passed on by the army group more or less without comment.<sup>62</sup> Tresckow also informed Bock's successor Field Marshal Hans-Günter von Kluge, who took over as C-in-C Army Group Centre in December 1941, of the killings in the area under his command, secure in the assumption that he would intervene or at least urge Hitler to change course. In the end, however, Kluge proved to be just as unwilling as his predecessor or any of the other field marshals to take such a step, let alone stronger measures.<sup>63</sup> These experiences opened Tresckow's eyes. He realized that an end to the criminal conduct of the war was not to be achieved through the normal channels.

### (b) *Cooperation with Einsatzgruppen*

The army group staff became aware at an early stage that the SS and the SD were planning executions on a grand scale in the area behind the front. *Einsatzgruppe* B under SS-Gruppenführer Arthur Nebe, former head of the Reich criminal police force, which was to 'operate' behind the lines, was subordinate—albeit only 'in respect of marching orders, supplies, and accommodation'—to Lt.-Gen. Max von Schenckendorff, commander of Army Group Centre rear areas.<sup>64</sup> On 19 June, three days before the attack was launched,

<sup>60</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 87. Gersdorff is mistaken inasmuch as the records clearly show that the attempt to persuade the C-in-C to protest related only to the decree on jurisdiction.

<sup>61</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 87–9; Ueberschär, 'Henning von Tresckow', 258.

<sup>62</sup> ObdH Gen. zbV ObdH (Gr. RWes) No. 91/41 g.Kdos. Chefs., Treatment of political commissars, 8 June 1941, BA-MA RH 2/2082, fo. 42; OKW WFS/Abt. L (IV/Qu) No. 44822/41 g.Kdos. Chefs., Directives on the treatment of political commissars, 6 June 1941, BA-MA RH 2/2082, fos. 43–7; Scheurig, *Henning von Tresckow*, 100–4.

<sup>63</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, ch. IX, and the sources cited therein; Thun-Hohenstein, 'General-feldmarschall Günther von Kluge'. On Field Marshal Manstein's attitude to the conspiracy, see Stahlberg, *Die verdammte Pflicht*, and Breithaupt, *Zwischen Front und Widerstand*.

<sup>64</sup> H.Gr. B Ia No. T 491/41 g.Kdos., daily reports, 20 June 1941, BA-MA RH 19 II/116, fo. 149; *Germany and the Second World War*, iv. 496; Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, 131–2.



the chief of command staff of the Reichsführer SS, SS-Brigadeführer Kurt Knoblauch, discussed the detailed arrangements for cooperation at army group staff HQ in Posen (Poznań).<sup>65</sup> The army group officer initially responsible was intelligence officer Gersdorff, later one of Tresckow's closest collaborators in the conspiracy.

Nebe, executed after 20 July 1944 as a member of the conspiracy, was—to the surprise of some—on good terms with Tresckow, who 'knew what a criminal he was'.<sup>66</sup> Nebe had conducted the investigations into the beer hall assassination attempt and had earlier led a task force detailed to get rid of the Polish intelligentsia, in other words he had been responsible for the very crimes that were the subject of the strongest protests within the Wehrmacht. Nebe was one of a small group of renegades from the ranks of the police and the administration, which also included Berlin police chief Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorff and Hans Bernd Gisevius.<sup>67</sup>

### (c) *Anti-Partisan Warfare*

One result of the rapid German advances at the beginning of Operation BARBAROSSA was that many scattered remnants of the Soviet army were left behind the German lines. And partisans soon became very active in the occupied area. The scale of the movement and the fact that the partisans were increasingly well trained, armed, and organized took Army Group Centre by surprise, and forced it to take action.<sup>68</sup> The commander of Army Group Centre rear areas accordingly organized a 'course to compare experience in dealing with partisans', which ran from 24 to 26 September 1941.<sup>69</sup> The programme shows that the army officers invited to attend the course confined themselves to subjects such as 'How to set up camp in a large area that has not yet been pacified'. SS-Gruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski spoke on 'The use of combing-out operations to capture commissars and partisans', and the deputy head of the security police and SD, Nebe, on 'The Jewish question with special reference to the partisan movement'.<sup>70</sup> The mixture of 'military' action to secure areas behind the lines and 'genocidal' drives to exterminate entire populations was characteristic of this 'campaign against the rebels' from the very beginning.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> KTB KdoStab RFSS No. 1, 19 June 1941, BA, NS 33/43, fo. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Philipp Freiherr von Boeselager in conversation with the author, Kreuzberg a.d. Ahr, 21 July 1997.

<sup>67</sup> On Nebe, see, inter alia, Rathert, *Verbrechen und Verschwörung*. On Gisevius, there is unfortunately no special account apart from his memoirs (Gisevius, *To the Bitter End*); but see below for an account of his contacts with the US secret service in Switzerland.

<sup>68</sup> Befh. rückw. H.Geb. Mitte, Ia, Korpsbefehl No. 52, 14 Sept. 1941, BA-MA, RH 22/225, fo. 48.

<sup>69</sup> Befh. rückw. H.Geb. Mitte, Ia, Korpsbefehl No. 53, 16 Sept. 1941, BA-MA, RH 22/225, fos. 63–4.

<sup>70</sup> Befh. rückw. H.Geb. Mitte, Ia, order of the day for the course on 'combating partisans', and list of participants, 23 Sept. 1941, BA-MA, RH 22/225, fos. 70–7.

<sup>71</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 1005–14; on the 'campaign against the partisans', see Umbreit, 'Das unbewältigte Problem', 134.



It was frequently argued that these violent measures were ultimately counterproductive, antagonizing the local people unnecessarily and causing them to rebel against the German occupation. Nevertheless, it was August 1942 before Army Group Centre finally gave orders for the coercive measures in the areas behind the lines to be stepped down, and prohibited 'the shooting of women and children, with the exception of armed women'.<sup>72</sup> Even that order had to be qualified a few days later: 'This does not affect the right of *Einsatzgruppen* or SD units to take executive measures against the civilian population on their own responsibility in the performance of their duties.'<sup>73</sup>

The fact that Army Group Centre ultimately had no control over German conduct in Belarus was made particularly clear by the events that followed the destruction of a railway station by a 350-strong group of partisans on 28 August 1942. Hitler himself demanded, on the very same day, 'immediate retaliation for the attack on the railway station at Slawnoje, employing the strongest measures to instil terror. Proposed measures to be reported.'<sup>74</sup> Tresckow, who as head of operations staff had recently assumed responsibility for the campaign against the partisans,<sup>75</sup> passed on a proposal from the commander of Army Group Centre rear areas that 100 'rebels or members of their families' should be shot in reprisals. Hitler immediately agreed.<sup>76</sup> In view of the Führer's direct intervention on this occasion, the fact that on other occasions the army group sometimes toned down the wording of draft orders for the execution of 'rebels' (the more neutral term 'partisans' having been banned in 1942<sup>77</sup>) was of little avail.<sup>78</sup>

The Wehrmacht's role in these crimes was highly repugnant to Tresckow and Gersdorff. This is clear from comments they appended in September 1942 to a 'Report from Panzer-AOK 3 on spiritual care and ideological guidance'. They saw the main purpose of such care in the following terms: 'a crucial point must be to produce upright and decent soldiers. The campaign in the east, because of the hard nature of the fighting and the peculiar conditions imposed by the lie of the land and the nature of the people, can undermine the troops' morale. More than any other campaign, it therefore calls for a clear position and a strong statement of that position. It is the duty of commanders at every level to prevent any blot on the German troops' escutcheon, however

<sup>72</sup> KG Sicherungstr. und Befh. H.Geb. Mitte, Ia, 3 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 22/233, fos. 66–7.

<sup>73</sup> KG Sicherungstr. und Befh. H.Geb. Mitte, Ia, 14 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 22/233, fo. 113.

<sup>74</sup> FS OKH/GenStdH/Op.Abt. I No. 11 027/42 g Kdos to H.Gr. Mitte, 28 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 II/153, fo. 15; see also Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 673.

<sup>75</sup> ObKdo H.Gr. Mitte Ia No. 6241/42 g.Kdos., 10 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 II/153, fo. 6.

<sup>76</sup> FS ObKdo H.Gr. Mitte to OKH/GenStdH/Op.Abt., 30 Aug. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 II/153, fos. 17–18; FS ObKdo H.Gr. Mitte to Befh. H.Geb. Mitte Ia No. 6819/42 g.Kdos, 1 Sept. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 II/153, fos. 20–1.

<sup>77</sup> Umbreit, 'Das unbewältigte Problem', 134.

<sup>78</sup> KG Sicherungstr. und Befh. H.Geb. Mitte, note for Ia H.Gr. Mitte, 31 Oct. 1942, changes in staff of H.Gr., BA-MA RH 19 II/153, fos. 41–2.

battle-hardened they may become and however difficult their life may be.<sup>79</sup> This was in stark contrast to the National Socialist doctrine of hatred, and it shows that the men of the resistance on the eastern front were certainly not 'willing accomplices in mass murder'.<sup>80</sup>

In the spring of 1943, a number of assassination attempts by conspirators on the staff of Army Group Centre failed in quick succession, notably the bomb smuggled onto the plane in which Hitler was to make the return flight from Army Group Centre HQ to Rastenburg.<sup>81</sup> Tresckow had formed a combat unit of chosen officers to mount an attack on Hitler and it was planned, at one time or another, either to take him prisoner or to shoot him. Given the high proportion of aristocrats among the conspirators, it is perhaps no surprise that the formation in question was cavalry, Lt.-Col. Georg Freiherr von Boeselager's 'Cavalry Regiment Centre'.<sup>82</sup> The unit was ostensibly earmarked for the campaign against the partisans. But here too the typically ambiguous nature of military resistance under the conditions of the war in the Soviet Union is apparent: the regiment was to serve the coup d'état but in the meantime its actual field of activity was the campaign against the partisans, its ostensible *raison d'être*. Boeselager's unit served in this campaign in the spring and summer of 1943 and gained 'valuable experience'. In a detailed report, Boeselager suggested that the area behind the lines should be divided into '(a) pacified areas, (b) areas threatened by rebel bands, (c) areas infested with rebel bands'. Particularly drastic measures should be taken in the areas classified as being 'infested with rebel bands': 'men under the age of 50 should be rounded up by the group and handed over to the economic inspectorate for employment as workers', after which 'the men in this area should be shot'. At the same time, Boeselager made it clear that military measures alone could not provide a lasting solution: 'Even if the above-mentioned proposals are adopted, an area can be permanently pacified only if the Russians are given a political objective.'<sup>83</sup> This was, once again, a call for radically different conduct vis-à-vis the Russian people or, in other words, a call to reject the racially and ideologically motivated war of extermination and to conduct a war on militarily and morally acceptable lines. Tresckow passed on these proposals, which implied a rejection of the current practice of arbitrary execution, and gave them his full backing.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> ObKdo H.Gr. Mitte Abt. 1c/A.O. No. 1036/42 geh. with app., 8 Sept. 1942, BA-MA RH 19 III/489, fos. 72–82.

<sup>80</sup> See Gerlach, 'Hitlergegner', 67.  
<sup>81</sup> Schlabbrendorff, *Secret War*, 230–8. Despite occasional doubts as to whether Schlabbrendorff's account is correct (see, for example, letter from Berndt von Kleist, 27 Apr. 1965, IfZ, ZS/A 31, ii: Kleist), it is assumed here that this assassination attempt did take place; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 334 n. 92. See also interrogation of Gersdorff at Military Service Intelligence Center, HQ US Forces European Theater OI-IIR/34, 18 Feb. 1946, IfZ, ED 100 (coll. Irving), Gersdorff.

<sup>82</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 354–5; Witte and Offermann, *Die Boeselagerschen Reiter*.

<sup>83</sup> Kavallerie-Regiment Mitte, Report on the combat tactics of the partisans . . . , 23 June 1943, BA-MA RH 19 II/172, fos. 41–6.

<sup>84</sup> ObKdo H.Gr. Mitte 1a No. 6810/43 to OKH GenStdH/Op.Abt. et al., 27 June 1943, BA-MA RH 19 II/172, fo. 40.

Why did the men who were conspiring against the Nazi regime take part at the same time in 'combing-out operations', in the 'campaign against bandits', which even allowing for military contingencies at the time frequently and conspicuously degenerated into naked mass murder?<sup>85</sup> A look at the conspirators' predicament may provide the answer. Only the active national-conservative elite were capable of presenting any serious threat to the criminal regime. To refuse to have anything to do with them in order to remain personally blameless meant effectively renouncing all chance of radical change. In this situation, Tresckow and his fellow-conspirators did not draw the selfish moralist conclusion that they should seek a posting away from the eastern front. On the contrary, they drew the responsible political conclusion that it was more important to overthrow the system that made criminals of everyone associated with it than it was to remain personally blameless. If there was to be an end to the senseless sacrifice of German troops and the crimes against Russians and Jews, Hitler must be killed.

On the national-conservative scale of values, a war against 'Bolshevism' was, it seemed, morally acceptable, including the escalation of the conflict with the partisans which was apparently regarded as an intrinsic part of the war (and was pursued with equal intensity on both sides). Merely to draw up a list of 'crimes committed by the occupying forces',<sup>86</sup> without examining the connections in each case between military contingencies, political values, and the need to proceed in secret, does not do justice to the complex situation in which the general staff officers found themselves as they planned a coup d'état in the middle of the war.

<sup>85</sup> Umbreit, 'Das unbewältigte Problem'; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 155.

<sup>86</sup> Gerlach, 'Hitlergegner', 70.

## IV. Communist Resistance during the War

It is true that most working-class resistance had been crushed by the time war broke out. Communist, though not necessarily working-class, resistance nevertheless survived in various forms and continued during the war. However, as Moscow failed to appreciate the conflict between conspiratorial constraints and public effectiveness, very soon the only groups left were those that in their own estimation were sufficiently independent to resist the pressure from the 'Centre' to expound their views in public.<sup>1</sup>

### I. THE HARNACK-SCHULZE-BOYSEN GROUP (THE *ROTE KAPELLE*)

The group later known as the *Berliner Rote Kapelle* consisted essentially of two circles formed in the early days of the regime. Arvid Harnack, a senior civil servant in the Reich ministry of aviation, gathered a group of solid middle-class people, most of them young and many of them women, who were studying Marxist theory together at traditional workers' educational association evening classes.<sup>2</sup> They escaped the attention of the Gestapo, probably because of their background and the fact that they did nothing to advertise their interests.<sup>3</sup> Only in 1939, after the war had started, did this group link up with the circle of friends attached to Harro Schulze-Boysen, a lieutenant in the Luftwaffe high command. Schulze-Boysen had come up through the traditional youth movement and Artur Mahraun's Young German movement,<sup>4</sup> so that this resistance group was chiefly remarkable for the differences between individual members in respect of their background and way of thinking.<sup>5</sup> The one thing they all had in common was their antipathy to the Weimar-style system of parliamentary democracy; indeed the Communists and the National Socialists were the worst enemies of the first German democracy. The group attached to Harnack and Schulze-Boysen was concerned with 'problems such as the compatibility of the nation-state tradition with socialist ideas', ideas that were in many respects romantic rather than modern.<sup>6</sup>

As to foreign policy, the group believed Germany's only hope of salvation was to turn to the Soviet Union. If it came to a decision between the capitalist west and the socialist east, there was no real alternative.<sup>7</sup> Hitler's pact with Stalin in 1939 was a particularly severe blow.<sup>8</sup> However, many members of the group were employed in the Reich ministry of aviation and the Luftwaffe

<sup>1</sup> Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 32, 38.

<sup>2</sup> Danyel, 'Rote Kapelle', 23.

<sup>3</sup> Brunckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 8–9, 15; Danyel, 'Endsieg', 470–1.

<sup>4</sup> Bahar, *Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalismus*, 4–5, 140.

<sup>5</sup> Danyel, 'Rote Kapelle', 12.

<sup>6</sup> Cited *ibid.* 21–2; see also Bahar, *Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalismus*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Brunckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 20–1.

<sup>8</sup> Danyel, 'Endsieg', 475.

high command, and by the autumn of 1940 they realized that everything was now moving towards a confrontation with the Soviet Union. They assumed that Hitler would not be able to win the ensuing war, and that the structure of Germany after the war would be strongly influenced by the Soviet Union. It was therefore important to establish connections there during the war.<sup>9</sup>

The Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group had extensive links with members of the national-conservative resistance. There is evidence of contacts with Klaus and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans von Dohnanyi, and also with the 'White Rose' in Munich.<sup>10</sup> There was also some sporadic contact with Communist resistance groups<sup>11</sup> and the small group attached to Rudolf Scheliha, which engaged in clandestine activities from a very early stage.<sup>12</sup> The Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group distributed a few leaflets on the subject of German crimes in the east among other things, but these had little effect on public opinion.<sup>13</sup> The classification of the group as part of the *Rote Kapelle* or Red Orchestra, a classification for which the Gestapo was originally responsible, suggests that it was part of a vast European espionage network. But the groups of spies operating under that name in Belgium and France, mainly under the control of Leopold Trepper, were in touch with the Berlin group only once, when the group's radio link with Moscow had broken down and it was supposed to establish a new link through Trepper's group. A radio message in this connection, intercepted by the Gestapo, brought the Berlin group to the attention of the Reich security main office and that was how the Gestapo came to regard it as a branch of the Soviet spy group that was operating in all the occupied territories in the west.<sup>14</sup>

Although that was not so, the group was nevertheless clearly involved in clandestine activities. In the case of Arvid Harnack, this had started in 1935 when he passed information to the Soviet embassy in Berlin for the first time. He had since worked against the Nazi regime on a regular basis, always through the Soviet diplomatic mission, divulging confidential information on German armament activities. In September 1940, he told the embassy about Hitler's preparations to attack the Soviet Union, but his warnings—like those of many others—fell on deaf ears.<sup>15</sup> It was Harnack who put Schulze-Boysen in touch with the Soviet embassy. All connections were through the embassy, which closed once the war started, and this created an enormous problem of communication that was never satisfactorily solved and eventually led to the group's exposure.

Even members who were not entrusted with the task of gathering and passing on information, one activity among many, could take part in the conspirators' game by, for instance, providing logistical support.<sup>16</sup> However, the

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 478; Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 38–9.

<sup>10</sup> Brunckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 20–1.

<sup>11</sup> Danyel, 'Endsieg', 474.

<sup>12</sup> Danyel, 'Rote Kapelle', 15.

<sup>13</sup> Brunckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 24, stresses the group's non-intelligence-service activities but is able to devote only a short section to those activities.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 23; Danyel, 'Endsieg', 465, 478.

<sup>16</sup> Brunckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 26.

group covered such a broad social and political spectrum that not all members were aware of the full extent of the treasonable activities. The increasing concentration on clandestine activities was attributable partly to the fact that the expected mass revolt against the Nazi war policy failed to materialize, so collaboration with foreign powers appeared to offer the only chance of success for an effective struggle against National Socialism.<sup>17</sup>

The arrests started at the end of August 1942. The first to be taken were Harro Schulze-Boysen and his wife Libertas,<sup>18</sup> to be followed in quick succession by the rest of the group. When it transpired that almost all the cases of espionage had involved the Luftwaffe, the reputation of Göring and his service was seriously tarnished.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the SD had won a battle in its war against its rival, the Abwehr. It had succeeded in eliminating a spy ring in the military area, thereby penetrating the Abwehr's innermost preserves. In September and October 1942 the Gestapo rounded up Rudolf Scheliha's group, a most important haul for the intelligence service.<sup>20</sup> The first death sentences were passed in December 1942, and Schulze-Boysen and his wife were hanged in Berlin-Plötzensee in the week before Christmas—the first of some forty-eight to be executed.<sup>21</sup> From the point of view of the system, the end of the Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group was the crowning achievement in a successful year of campaigning against Communist groups. Earlier in the year, substantial Communist groups in Berlin and Hamburg had been eliminated, the last major Communist organizations in Reich territory.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter, the only effective Communist resistance to National Socialism came from outside.

To interpret the dealings of the Harnack-Schulze-Boysen group as 'resistance', completely disregarding their clandestine operations, does not do justice to their activity or its effects. For the western Allies, the main point was that Stalin had clearly succeeded in forging links with sections of the military leadership of the Third Reich and opening the way for the idea that Germany might turn to the east. So, in their future assessment of other resistance groups, the British and the Americans were always to consider whether they too might have leanings in that direction.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A 'FREE GERMANY'

The failure of Communist resistance activities within the Reich may have been one of the factors that prompted the Soviet leadership in the summer of 1943 to encourage some of the prisoners of war who had fallen into Soviet hands to establish an anti-fascist organization.<sup>24</sup> The result was the National Committee

<sup>17</sup> Danyel, 'Endsieg', 478.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 483; Brunnckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Danyel, 'Endsieg', 466; Brunnckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 19; Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 545–6.

<sup>20</sup> Tüchel, 'Die Gestapo-Sonderkommission', 151.

<sup>21</sup> Brunnckhorst, *Die Berliner Widerstandsorganisation*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 38–9.

<sup>23</sup> *The Rote Kapelle*, pp.xiii 139; Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 545–6.

<sup>24</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 31.

for a 'Free Germany' (*Nationalkomitee 'Freies Deutschland'*, NKFD)<sup>25</sup> founded in the Krasnogorsk prisoner of war camp on 12 July 1943. Members included both prisoners of war and German Communists who had gone into exile in the Soviet Union before the war. The latter were in the minority in terms of numbers, but their status gave them greater political influence.<sup>26</sup> The aims of the group were set out in a founding manifesto, which called for the overthrow of Hitler, an end to the war, and the opening of German–Soviet peace negotiations.<sup>27</sup> The response among the German prisoners, especially the officers, was very poor. A separate organization for officers, the Association of German Officers (*Bund Deutscher Offiziere*, BDO), was accordingly set up in the camp at Lunevo on 21 September 1943.<sup>28</sup>

The aims of the members of the German forces who joined, particularly those in senior ranks and especially the vice-president of the NKFD and president of the BDO, Gen. Walther von Seydlitz-Kurzbach, were confined exclusively to the nation state. There was no mention of German war crimes, and if the subject of Hitler's criminal conduct of the war came up it was generally in the form of comments on his lack of military expertise.<sup>29</sup> On the Soviet side, the NKFD was assured that—subject to successful action against Hitler and the Nazi regime—the Soviet Union would support a Germany within the 1937 borders, the Wehrmacht to remain intact. This was a very different proposition from the western Allies' demand for unconditional surrender, with the result that even patriotic officers felt justified in joining the National Committee.<sup>30</sup> There was of course the obligatory reference to the convention of 1812, the historical precedent of the Prussian general, Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, who had also changed sides against his king's will, withdrawn his troops from the Franco-Prussian alliance army fighting against Russia, and thereby involved Prussia in a national war against Napoleon.<sup>31</sup>

The NKFD did not win massive support among the German prisoners of war at any point in the war, despite the fact that the prison authorities often gave preference to members of the Committee when selecting men for administrative functions in the prisoner-of-war camps, with the result that they were better fed and cared for and were spared the hardest work.<sup>32</sup> The Committee concentrated mainly on political propaganda, both in the camps and at the front, primarily in the form of leaflets. Its room for manoeuvre was considerably reduced when the Allies agreed at the Teheran Conference that their common war aim was to be unconditional surrender and when, after 20 July 1944,

<sup>25</sup> Frieser, 'Nationalkomitee', 71–2; Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 542.

<sup>26</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 31.

<sup>27</sup> Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 542; Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 32.

<sup>28</sup> Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 543; Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 589.

<sup>29</sup> Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 553.

<sup>30</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 31; Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 545.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>32</sup> Frieser, *Krieg hinter Stacheldraht*, 144–82; for a critical account, albeit without any detailed evidence, see Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 548–9.



any hopes of undermining the Nazi regime from within were dashed, even in the Soviet Union. All the Committee could do now was call on individual members of the Wehrmacht or whole units to desert, with occasional support from members of the NKFD appearing in German uniform to conduct covert operations at the front.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, it was borne in upon the leading officers in the NKFD and the BDO that the Soviet promises were of little value. When, in February 1944, Seydlitz pressed in a memorandum for the original promises to be honoured and for the NKFD to have a part in forming a post-war German government, Stalin did not feel that he was under any obligation to agree. On the contrary, he was inclined to back the KPD, the German Communist Party in exile, which he could confidently expect to take a less national and less independent line.<sup>34</sup> By the end of 1944, the NKFD had lost all political influence, although an appeal in December 1944 from Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus, who had been taken prisoner at Stalingrad, still caused a bit of a stir.<sup>35</sup> The now meaningless Committee was disbanded on 2 November 1945.

The NKFD was a tool of Soviet policy from the day it was formed, although not all the Germans involved in it were always fully aware of the fact. The aims pursued by Moscow ranged from seeking to undermine German military efforts by appearing to offer a separate peace to using that offer as a ploy to exert greater pressure on the western Allies.<sup>36</sup> The Americans and the British regarded the National Committee as a threat; throughout the war, they were aware of the danger that Stalin might join forces with Germany—as he had done in 1939—particularly after a change of government, to the detriment of the west. Serious thought was even given at one point to the possibility of establishing a similar counter-organization in the west.<sup>37</sup>

Another important step from the Soviet point of view was that the organization might be a convenient interlocutor for any opposition groups, or even a new government within Germany.<sup>38</sup> However, the national-conservative resistance appeared to have little inclination to forge links with the NKFD. Stauffenberg, for example, did not consider that such statements of intent as he had seen provided a sound enough basis for him to have anything to do with it.<sup>39</sup> Conversely, members of the resistance did not hesitate, in their outside contacts with the western Allies, to use the National Committee to add force to their demands for diplomatic concessions in the event of a coup.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 548; Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 36, 42; Le Tissier, 'Deutsche gegen Deutsche'.

<sup>34</sup> Bungert, 'Eine meisterhafter Schachzug', 107–8; Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 550–1.

<sup>35</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 43.

<sup>36</sup> Bungert, *Das Nationalkomitee*, 298; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 65.

<sup>37</sup> Bungert, *Das Nationalkomitee*, 90–1, 299–300; Heideking, 'Die "Breakers"-Akte', 37.

<sup>38</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 34–5.

<sup>39</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 383.

<sup>40</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 284–5.

In its reflections on internal policy the national-conservative opposition had to face the fact that Soviet-backed Communist elements in Germany might well be a force to be reckoned with after a coup. The NKFD was one of the factors that prompted this somewhat aristocratic resistance group to set about turning itself into a 'popular movement'. But it also had to make sure that it was not politically outflanked, on the right as well as the left, by the combination of national and socialist elements in the NKFD.<sup>41</sup> However, the more the NKFD was seduced by Soviet propaganda in the course of 1944, the more it lost credibility even among the opposition in Germany. Stauffenberg's aim was to save the army, and NKFD calls for mass desertions were contrary to that aim. There was probably never any direct link with Stauffenberg.<sup>42</sup> The German resistance preferred classic diplomatic contacts with the top Soviet state authorities, and the former German ambassador in Moscow, Friedrich Werner Graf von der Schulenburg, was to perform that function.<sup>43</sup> Although he knew from Gestapo reports that it was not the case, Himmler insisted that the resistance had been in touch with the National Committee. He also saw to it that the prosecution of the 20 July conspirators, particularly in respect of the liability of all the members of a family for the crimes of one member, was extended to include the families of members of the NKFD.<sup>44</sup>

The NKFD and the BDO sought the radical removal of the National Socialist regime; it therefore seems right to classify their actions as resistance. However, working in the relative safety of prisoner-of-war camps, where in case of doubt one's activities did not cause one to be treated more harshly by the prison authorities, is not the same as devoting one's life to resistance at the very heart of the Nazi regime. It is not just a matter of degree.<sup>45</sup> 'Seen in this light, the National Committee was not a resistance movement behind barbed wire, it produced its effect on the basis of actions by individuals who undoubtedly regarded what they did as resistance.'<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 186; Mommsen, 'Bürgerlicher Widerstand', 61–2.

<sup>42</sup> Ueberschär, 'NKVD', 42; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 507 (29 Nov. 1944).

<sup>43</sup> Ueberschär, 'Zum "Rußlandbild"', 80.

<sup>44</sup> Id., 'NKVD', 39–40.

<sup>45</sup> Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät?', 263; Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 541.

<sup>46</sup> Morré, 'Das Nationalkomitee', 552.

## V. The Battle with the Party and the SS

### I. THE POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIMMLER AND FROMM

NATIONAL-CONSERVATIVE resistance was at once the high point and the turning point in a battle between the 'new', 'revolutionary' National Socialism and the traditional elites. Both the National Socialists and their opponents, constantly derided as 'reactionaries', assumed that the conflict between them would not come to a head until the end of the war. Even so, the differences were to become more acute during the war and after 1939 both sides began to prepare for the inevitable final battle. If there was to be a rerun of 1918/19, they wanted to be armed and ready. As Stauffenberg put it to his fellow-officer Hößlin: 'The officer corps must not fail again and allow its opponents to seize the initiative as it did in 1918. It must act in accordance with its own sense of moral responsibility. . . . The Wehrmacht is the most conservative institution in the state which also has its roots in the people.'<sup>1</sup>

Some members of the resistance had seen the battle coming even before the war. It had been clear to Oster, for example, ever since the 'Röhm putsch' in 1934, that the differences were fundamental: 'The events of 30 June 1934 presented the first opportunity to nip these gangster tactics in the bud. But Himmler and Heydrich were the victors in this clash between the Wehrmacht and the SS.'<sup>2</sup> Tresckow too had hoped, after the Sudetenland crisis in the autumn of 1938, that the army would take action against the forces of the regime, particularly the SS and the Gestapo.<sup>3</sup> The appointment of Himmler in 1936 as Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police in the Reich ministry of the interior was seen by the army as an encroachment on its political prerogatives in internal affairs, particularly in the event of war, but its protests were to no avail.<sup>4</sup> A number of specific proposals for apparently reasonable structural changes were turned down. Some—like the proposal to place the foreign intelligence office under the army high command, or the proposal to establish a 'Reich security office' under military control in the event of war—would have given the military more political weight during the war.<sup>5</sup>

An important source of conflict was the attempt by the National Socialist system, notably that most radical exponent of power politics, Himmler, to gain control of the essential resources for the conduct of the war that

<sup>1</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 373 (9 Sept. 1944, interrogation of Hößlin).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 451 (16 Oct. 1944); cited in Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 30.

<sup>4</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 79.

<sup>5</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 134.

were in the hands of the 'reactionary' army, especially as the army had two highly important instruments of power in the form of the Wehrmacht's albeit modest nuclear programme and the development of the so-called V-weapons.<sup>6</sup> The army's position in this connection had been fatally weakened, in line with the system, by the completely inappropriate command structure: after Hitler assumed supreme command of the army, the central coordinator, the head of army equipment and commander of the replacement army, had been placed under the direct control of the OKW. This looked like promotion but in fact it meant that, instead of reporting direct to Hitler as C-in-C of the army, Fromm reported to his hated rival, Keitel, from whom he certainly could not expect any support in battles with the SS.<sup>7</sup> Fromm's memorandum of October 1941 and, even more, the radical proposals contained in his November 1942 paper on the Reich's position in respect of men and matériel, 'At the height of power', further alienated Hitler and played into his enemies' hands.<sup>8</sup>

Under the impact of the increasingly heavy air raids, Fromm urgently requested that executive power within the territory of the Reich be transferred to the military—a request that was tantamount to seeking a reduction in Himmler's and the NSDAP Gauleiters' political authority in internal affairs, Himmler having been appointed Reich minister of the interior in the summer of 1943.<sup>9</sup> Hitler absolutely refused to agree and chose instead to increase Himmler's powers, to the detriment of the replacement army. An important step in this connection was the order issued in the summer of 1944, shortly before 20 July, instructing Himmler to raise *Volksgründendivisionen* or people's infantry divisions.<sup>10</sup> The army was kept out of the picture to such an extent that Himmler declined to attend a meeting with Hitler on 15 July 1944 to review the situation because he wanted to see Hitler separately to discuss a number of matters which, he said, were nothing to do with the military, including a possible 'airborne attack on Führer HQ'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> App. 2 to post-war de-nazification questionnaire by Maj.-Gen. (ret'd.) Dr-Ing. Werner Kennes, February 1947, BA-MA MStG 1/2936. Kennes was, according to his own testimony, 'one of the oldest subordinates of Lt.-Gen. Fromm' and head of section on the staff of the head of army equipment and commander of the replacement army from July 1941 to December 1944. See also Kroener, 'Friedrich Fromm', 172.

<sup>7</sup> Mueller, 'Friedrich Fromm', 72-3; Gen. Carl-Erik Köhler and Maj.-Gen. (ret'd.) Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041dd [1950], BA-MA ZA i/1932, fo. 181.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter II of this section; Mueller, 'Friedrich Fromm', 74; Kroener, 'Zwischen Blitzsieg und Verhandlungsfrieden'; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 306; Gen. Carl-Erik Köhler and Maj.-Gen. (ret'd.) Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'Der Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres im Rahmen des Oberkommandos des Heeres', Study P-041 dd [1950], BA-MA ZA i/1932, fo. 216-17.

<sup>9</sup> Kroener, 'Friedrich Fromm', 182-4; see also in connection with subsequent passages.

<sup>10</sup> Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 102.

<sup>11</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 454.

But in other areas too, organizational changes in the Nazi state curtailed traditional military powers essential for an efficient conduct of the war. These changes included the creation of the post of general plenipotentiary for manpower, for instance, and the steady extension of Speer's powers in the armaments sector. It became increasingly clear that the primary concern was not to optimize the war effort but to change the power structure within the Reich to the detriment of the traditional elites: 'The Wehrmacht was obviously in retreat on all fronts, including the home front.'<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in many respects it may actually have been to the regime's advantage in this power struggle that military victories were now a thing of the past: it would be harder to deny victorious marshals a share of power than to reject the claims of a defeated army.<sup>13</sup>

Even before 20 July 1944, a rumour began to circulate that Himmler was to take command of army formations within the Reich, further extending the Party's control over all sections of German society.<sup>14</sup> With this in mind, the resistance had considered sending Tresckow to Berlin on the day of the coup, where he would be responsible as 'chief of the German police' for consolidating the change of regime. Assigning this task to a military man would also have meant a clear break with the previous system in which Himmler had been both chief of police and head of the SS.<sup>15</sup>

On the evening of 20 July, Fromm made absolutely no move to support the coup. On the contrary, it was suppressed on his initiative, and the leading conspirators were shot on his orders.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, on the evening itself there was never any doubt in the Führer's headquarters that Fromm was behind the coup and that the assassin—Fromm's chief of staff, Stauffenberg—was merely acting as his instrument, especially as the first orders to be transmitted by telex went out under his name. So Hitler immediately put Himmler in charge of the replacement army, bringing the resources of the army and the Waffen-SS together under one command. Even after it became clear, in the course of the subsequent investigations, what Fromm's role had really been, Hitler did not cancel the appointment of Himmler but had Fromm court-martialled and sentenced to death.<sup>17</sup> The exponents of the system were concerned not so much with Fromm's role on 20 July as with settling scores with the generals, whom they detested.

<sup>12</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 907.

<sup>13</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 315.

<sup>14</sup> *USA und deutscher Widerstand*, 95.

<sup>15</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 61 (27 July 1944), 395 (18 Sept. 1944). For a different interpretation, implying that they held a similar position, see Gerlach, 'Männer des 20. Juli', 446 n. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Maj.-Gen. Kurt Haseloff, opinion on the questions raised in the letter of 28 May 1952 from RA Sprotte to Maj.-Gen. Kennes, BA-MA MSg 1/2937; opinion [by Maj.-Gen. Kennes] on Wolfgang Müller, 'Gegen eine neue Dolchstoßlüge', 27 Aug. 1947, BA-MA MSg 1/2938.

<sup>17</sup> Kroener, 'Friedrich Fromm', 182–4.

The resistance realized of course that the Waffen-SS represented a particular threat. It would be the real enemy in any political battles on home ground, and it was already preparing for them by tightening up its organization and increasing its strength.<sup>18</sup> The orders for the coup on 20 July 1944 accordingly arranged for battle to commence at a point when the element of surprise would give the army the advantage and the forces loyal to the system would be quite literally 'leaderless': 'An unscrupulous clique of Party leaders who have never been anywhere near the front has attempted to take advantage of the situation to attack our hard-pressed forces from behind and seize power for their own ends. . . . I therefore issue the following order: all Waffen-SS units are to be incorporated in the army with immediate effect . . . Waffen-SS: if there is any doubt as to whether Waffen-SS commanders or senior officers will obey orders, or if they appear to be unfit for duty, they are to be taken into protective custody and replaced by army officers. Prompt and energetic action must be taken, with superior forces, to avoid serious bloodshed.'<sup>19</sup> It is clear from the last sentence that 'bloodshed' was expected, and that it was realized that the Waffen-SS was unlikely to be disbanded and absorbed into the regular army without a struggle.

## 2. THE PREFERENCE ACCORDED TO THE WAFFEN-SS, AND THE GESTAPO'S INFLUENCE ON THE ARMY

The army officers were not, as Gestapo investigators later suggested,<sup>20</sup> motivated by snobbery or by an objection to commanders with little previous technical training being placed on an equal footing with highly qualified officers of the Wehrmacht, but by the fact that the SS saw itself as an instrument for the coming 'battle between two different ideologies'.<sup>21</sup> Even before 1939, the SS had already called the Wehrmacht's monopoly on arms into question by forming armed units, and even then commanders of armed SS troops sometimes openly displayed their contempt for the army.<sup>22</sup> In 1935, a brawl between armed members of the SS and army men even led to a (vain) demand for SS units to be disbanded.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly before the Sudetenland crisis, Hitler placed the 'SS-Verfügungstruppe'—militarized SS units assigned to special political operations within the Reich—on an equal footing with the army in respect

<sup>18</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1062–4.

<sup>19</sup> Telex HOKW 02150 20 July 44 16.45 to W .Kdo.XII, repr. in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 65–6 (27 July 1944); see also similar telex, repr. *ibid.* 66–82.

<sup>20</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 528 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>21</sup> Peter, 'General der Artillerie Eduard Wagner', 264.

<sup>22</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 67–8, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 78.

of the right to bear arms,<sup>24</sup> in a move to counterbalance the hesitant attitude of the army in general and Beck in particular on the question of a European war. Beck, as chief of the army general staff, warned that 'the radicals will say that the Führer's plans failed to materialize because of incompetence on the part of the Wehrmacht and the Wehrmacht high command', and called for 'discussions between the Wehrmacht and the SS to clarify the situation'.<sup>25</sup> The concentration camp guard units (*SS-Totenkopfverbände* or Death's Head units) also helped to tip the internal political balance of power even further in favour of the regime and against the army.<sup>26</sup>

The reasons for the preference accorded to the Waffen-SS (a term introduced in 1940) by the Nazi regime were essentially ideological. This 'special army'<sup>27</sup> was deliberately conceived by Hitler, Himmler, and Göring as an alternative to the army—which is why the Waffen-SS was a land-based fighting force and why there was never any comparable air or naval force. The National Socialist leaders expressed their reservations about the army quite openly. Goebbels, for example, made fun of the 'pot-bellied majors' in the Bendlerblock (the Berlin headquarters of the OKW),<sup>28</sup> whom he and the Führer compared unfavourably with the SS.

The formation of the Waffen-SS was not born of military necessity. On the contrary, the various 'special armies' were a source of friction and unnecessary duplication. It was essentially a reaction to the army's failure to adapt quickly enough to the general social thrust of the National Socialist system.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore positively misleading to suggest that the Wehrmacht was a pillar of the Nazi system because it had 'close links'<sup>30</sup> with the Waffen-SS, when in fact rivalry was the characteristic feature of the relationship between the two formations.

This also applies to the exploitation of the new opportunities for recruitment opened up by the war of expansion. As a result of the army's reluctance to take part in the 'special operations'—in other words, wholesale murder—in the areas behind the lines, it was decreed that Himmler and the SS alone were to have executive power and access to the 'human resources' in the occupied territories,<sup>31</sup> in so far as the said resources were 'Germanic'. Any 'foreign units' formed by the army would be drawn exclusively from ethnic groups that were racially unacceptable to the SS. The independent action of SS units engaged in 'special operations', including units nominally under army command, was the subject of repeated complaints<sup>32</sup> and reflected the different war aims pursued by the army and the Party respectively.

<sup>24</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 600; Besson, 'Zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialistischen Führungsoffiziers', 77.

<sup>25</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 553.

<sup>26</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 826–7.

<sup>27</sup> Term employed by Stumpf, 'Die Luftwaffe als drittes Heer', 858.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1067.

<sup>29</sup> Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 292–3, 362.

<sup>30</sup> Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 281.

<sup>31</sup> Hoffmann, *Ostlegionen*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Boll, 'Aktionen nach Kriegsbrauch', 786.



The war presented Himmler's empire with splendid opportunities to undermine the position of the military authorities in the power structure of the Third Reich. This was particularly evident in the area of conflict between military intelligence and counter-intelligence and the SD. The destruction of the Abwehr began with Oster's dismissal in April 1943 on the basis of SD investigations of his staff. With Canaris under house arrest and the Abwehr incorporated in the Reich security main office in February 1944,<sup>33</sup> it was virtually complete. In this connection, Maj. Otto Kiep was the first officer ever to be arrested directly by the Gestapo and to be no longer subject to martial law, a further attack on the army's position.<sup>34</sup> Quite apart from purely military considerations, the increasing economic activities of the SS were another sign of its growing power.<sup>35</sup>

The ranks of the Waffen-SS had swelled from upwards of 17,000 in 1937 to some 70,000 at the beginning of the war, and by 1944 it was almost 600,000 strong. The record increase was in 1943 when its numbers more than doubled, rising from 240,000 to more than 500,000 in a single year. Altogether, some 900,000 men served in its ranks in the course of the war.<sup>36</sup> For a long time, the SS accepted only physically outstanding recruits and had first pick of weapons and equipment, with the result that Waffen-SS divisions were generally superior to the equivalent army divisions.<sup>37</sup> This strength was maintained at the direct expense of the army, which was allocated an ever decreasing share of the available reservoir of recruits—particularly in 1944.<sup>38</sup> The SS deliberately flouted all the rules imposing upper limits on its numbers, an attitude that was naturally opposed even in the Wehrmacht executive office.<sup>39</sup>

One or two generals had protested against SS excesses at a very early stage. In 1939 Blaskowitz, for example, was already saying that 'the troops' attitude to the police and the SS alternates between disgust and hatred'.<sup>40</sup> But as the war went on—and brutality became widespread even in some parts of the army—the 'unequal treatment and equipment of the competing armies'<sup>41</sup> became more apparent. The Gestapo, in its investigations, regarded this as an important motive among Hitler's military opponents.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup> John, 'Falsch und zu spät', 36; *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3-28 (telegram 2173-75), 228-9; Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr'; Heideking, 'Die "Breakers"-Akte', 42 n. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 448.

<sup>35</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 478.

<sup>36</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1062; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 215.

<sup>37</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 823.

<sup>38</sup> Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 224.

<sup>39</sup> Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 305, 342; for a recent view, see also Neitzel, 'Des Forschens noch wert?', *inter alia* 408.

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Ludewig, 'Blaskowitz', 16.

<sup>41</sup> Gerngross, *Aufstand*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 528 (15 Dec. 1944).

## 3. SAVING THE ARMY

When Stauffenberg spoke of 'saving the army', his concern was not only to prevent unnecessary losses but to preserve certain moral values as such.<sup>43</sup> If the complete disempowerment of the military and the traditional elites was to be prevented before it was too late, and action was to be taken against the increasingly strong military potential of the Party apparatus, the core of the army must be preserved in the meantime—or a move made when the opportunity arose.<sup>44</sup> The object of 'saving the army' was not only to prevent a complete military collapse (which Stauffenberg and Tresckow considered inevitable in any case) but, as Goerdeler put it, 'to ensure that the Wehrmacht in particular continued to be a useful instrument in the hands of its own leaders'.<sup>45</sup>

The value of having such an instrument was obvious. During the Fritsch crisis in 1938, some of the opposition already feared an SS or Gestapo putsch in the form of a 'surprise attack' on the war ministry, stripping the Wehrmacht leadership of its powers.<sup>46</sup> Beck's attitude at this point was determined by the assumption that Hitler needed to be rescued from this *Cheka* or secret service entourage.<sup>47</sup> The widespread antagonism between the Wehrmacht and the SS was exploited on occasion by Stauffenberg and other conspirators in attempts to recruit supporters, though not always with the success they could have wished.<sup>48</sup> In fact, what the leaders of the National Socialist Reich had in mind was a future in which the SS would not supplant the army but control it: 'The best thing I leave to my successor', Hitler observed to Himmler in September 1943, 'is the SS.' And according to Himmler's plans the peacetime strength of the SS as a whole was to be 400,000, including 100,000 members of the Waffen-SS.<sup>49</sup> Hitler had already announced, in a speech to the heads of the Wehrmacht delivered on 23 November 1939, that he intended to use the war to defeat opponents within the Reich,<sup>50</sup> and that the SS and the Waffen-SS would play a central part in this connection.<sup>51</sup>

None of those concerned had any doubt that the relative weighting of the army and the Waffen-SS would have to be decided at the end of the war,

<sup>43</sup> Here, one must agree with Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 446, who says of Stauffenberg: 'He was a soldier through and through. For him, saving his country and saving the Wehrmacht were one and the same thing.'

<sup>44</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 529 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 34 (24 July 1944); interpretation suggested in Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 125.

<sup>46</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 285–9.

<sup>47</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 103; Hamerow, *Road to the Wolf's Lair*, 241.

<sup>48</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 312–14 (29 Aug. 1944).

<sup>49</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1067, where the quotation occurs; figures from Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 343–5; on the role of the Waffen-SS after the war, Himmler's speech in Posen on 3 Aug. 1944 and its interpretation, *ibid.* 349.

<sup>50</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 176–7.

<sup>51</sup> Wegner, 'Anmerkungen', *inter alia* 3–4.

and that the fundamental political organization of the Reich in general—up to and including its policy on the Church—would have to be clarified after the war: ‘There was a general assumption that the system would have to be reformed after the war, that is after the war was won, although views as to the direction the reforms should take depended on the political position of the protagonists.’<sup>52</sup> Many officers too clearly wanted to postpone the day of reckoning with the ‘criminals’, the perpetrators of the mass murders in the east, until after the war.<sup>53</sup> In many cases, they were thinking of the end of the First World War in 1918 and the subsequent unrest. So the problem was on the one hand to forestall any attempt by the Communists to seize power with Soviet support, and on the other to survive the battle with the Nazi regime.<sup>54</sup> And it was noted with some bitterness that the SS was busy preparing young men and women for the coming ideological battle in its numerous schools throughout the Reich and at the same time preventing them from serving at the front.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Mommsen, ‘Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung’, 419. On the solution of the ‘Church question’, the ‘Jewish question’, and other similar subjects, see also the chapters by Tobias Jersak in the present volume.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Witte and Offermann, *Die Boeselagerschen Reiter*, 23, as early as 1941; Steinbach, ‘Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen’, 977, which examines a statement by Hermann Kaiser, and Meyer ‘Auswirkungen’, 309, on the ideas of Ernst Jünger.

<sup>54</sup> Mommsen, ‘Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft’, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 218.

## VI. The Organization of the Coup d'État: General Staff Plans and the Military Putsch

### I. A 'STATE OF SIEGE'

To the present democratic way of thinking in Germany, the idea that the military might take over the executive is an anomaly.<sup>1</sup> That was not the case in 1944. What Stauffenberg and his fellow-conspirators had in mind was a familiar part of normal discourse at the time under the more or less synonymous terms 'state of siege', 'state of emergency', 'martial law', or even 'assumption of executive powers by the army'. It was such common currency that plans for the army to assume executive powers, at least in the event of a threat from a source outside the military and the Nazi state, were quite openly pursued within the army, which was thinking of a possible Communist revolt, unrest in the ranks of forced labour, or an airborne landing of Allied troops.<sup>2</sup> There was a long tradition in Prussian Germany of the military taking over essential state functions in a crisis.

Most legal provisions for a military state of emergency went back to the Prussian law of 4 June 1851 on the state of siege,<sup>3</sup> which remained in force, in the absence of any imperial regulation, throughout the period of imperial German rule. The law in question drew a clear distinction between external and internal threats; in the event of a 'disturbance' the responsibility for declaring a state of emergency was incumbent on the central authority of the Prussian government. Under the 1871 constitution the right to declare a 'state of war' was vested in the Kaiser as supreme commander of the armed forces. As a result, the generals in command had executive powers within Reich territory during the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

The Republic too had recourse to the state-of-emergency instrument in cases of internal unrest, especially as Article 48 of the Weimar constitution made express provision for it to do so. The Kapp putsch, for example, although unsuccessful, was based on assumption of executive powers,<sup>5</sup> and a state of emergency was declared and the Reichswehr assumed executive powers after

<sup>1</sup> Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät?', 277.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 310 (28 Aug. 1944).

<sup>3</sup> On this and subsequent points, see Deist, 'Der Kriegszustand nach Art. 68', pp. xxxi-iv; also, to the same effect, Diest, 'Voraussetzungen innenpolitischen Handelns'.

<sup>4</sup> *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte*, section v, 125-7; Müller in *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I.

<sup>5</sup> Mommsen, 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 581-2.

the Hitler–Ludendorff putsch in 1923.<sup>6</sup> The investigating committee appointed by the Bavarian parliament found, at the house of National Socialist Theodor von der Pfordten, who was shot at the Feldherrnhalle memorial in Munich, an ‘emergency constitution’ that would have led to ‘military economic dictatorship’. Article 9 of this constitution read: ‘The whole of the Reich is officially in a state of siege.’<sup>7</sup> Johannes Popitz, a highly conservative state secretary in the Reich finance ministry, is supposed to have drafted ‘Directions on the treatment of the law on the state of siege’ during the mid-1920s.<sup>8</sup>

After the National Socialists’ overwhelming victory in the 1932 elections, conservative circles began to consider how to stop Hitler becoming chancellor. The NSDAP was by far the strongest party in the Reichstag, so it would mean acting against parliament, in open breach of the constitution (which was in any case unpopular with the conservatives). In their view, the democratic parliamentary system was discredited and there was no possibility of restoring the Weimar Republic’s authority by democratic means so a breach of the constitution appeared to be acceptable, especially as President Hindenburg himself had intimated that he might possibly countenance such a move.<sup>9</sup> In November 1932 leading members of the Reichswehr organized ‘Planspiel Ott’, a war game in which they investigated the possibility of a military coup. They concluded that the 100,000-strong army would not be able to deal with the situation if the socialists and Communists were to call a general strike, especially as the country’s internal weaknesses might expose it to an external threat at the same time.<sup>10</sup> However, on 27 January 1933 they published a new edition of the ‘Notes on a military state of emergency’ so that ‘in the event of a sudden military state of emergency, all necessary measures can be taken without delay’.<sup>11</sup> And in 1935 the chief of the army general staff, Beck, was already speaking to a very small circle of trusted friends about the possibility of a military putsch against the Führer.<sup>12</sup>

By the autumn of 1938, it had become clear in the course of their investigations just how difficult it might be to mount a coup d’état in the conditions that obtained in the Third Reich. The appointment of Himmler to the post of Reichsführer SS and chief of police in 1936 had already given the army cause for concern, as it might pose a threat to the replacement army’s freedom of movement in an internal crisis.<sup>13</sup> Even at this early stage it was already impossible to count on support from Wehrmacht units, because of the massive influx of ideologically ‘sound’ young officers and men. Worse still, the

<sup>6</sup> Pyta, ‘Vorbereitungen’, 387.

<sup>7</sup> Meinl, ‘Das gesamte bewegliche und unbewegliche Vermögen’, 44–7, 54.

<sup>8</sup> Mommsen, ‘Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne’, 581.

<sup>9</sup> Kershaw, ‘Der 30. Januar 1933’, 277.

<sup>10</sup> Pyta, ‘Vorbereitungen’, 390; Kolb and Pyta, ‘Staatsnotstandsplanung’, 170–1; John, ‘Am achten Jahrestag’; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 42–3. It appears somewhat doubtful that ‘Planspiel Ott’ also covered a National Socialist seizure of power.

<sup>11</sup> From Kolb and Pyta, ‘Staatsnotstandsplanung’, 179. <sup>12</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, ‘Wehrmacht und Widerstand’, 79.

army now had a whole range of dangerous enemies on its home ground, in the form of the many armed SS units and offices, the Gestapo secret police, the infamous SD, and remnants of the SA. Leading proponents of the coup and sympathizers, including Oster, Gisevius, Hjalmar Schacht, and Halder, even thought they could detect an extremely cunning deployment of forces loyal to the system, expressly designed to prevent a military putsch.<sup>14</sup>

On the very eve of the attack on Poland, Hitler still refused to give the military the executive powers within Germany that they had had in the First World War. Any move to place the police under the command of the Wehrmacht rather than the chief of police was unthinkable; the Nazis were already far too suspicious of the 'reactionary' generals.<sup>15</sup> On the outbreak of war in September 1939, the military naturally assumed executive powers in the occupied territories as they had when the Sudetenland was occupied in 1938,<sup>16</sup> but these powers were quickly removed, largely because some members of the military protested over the crimes against the local population. Army officers steeped in tradition were well aware that these developments meant that the powers of the military were being curtailed to strengthen the Party's position.<sup>17</sup>

The generals had called for the military war economy department under Maj.-Gen. Georg Thomas to be developed to form a 'War Economy General Staff', as it were, but the idea of a largely independent organization was adopted instead, an idea that was also to apply to the armaments industry.<sup>18</sup> Another factor that made it difficult for the army to seize power was the sheer number of bodies and authorities involved in the central administration, in the armaments sector, and in the management of manpower resources, considered earlier in connection with the desire to improve the command structure as a motive for military resistance. According to statements made to the Gestapo by Capt. Gehre and Gen. Eduard Wagner, by the end of 1941 a military putsch to marshal all the forces required to prosecute the war was already regarded as the 'universal remedy' for the fragmentation of the war effort.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the desired coup could be achieved only by declaring a military state of emergency gave the military men among the conspirators an advantage that was a cause of some concern to the politicians, notably Goerdeler.<sup>20</sup> Stauffenberg had already toyed with the idea of 'establishing a temporary military dictatorship' in February 1942.<sup>21</sup> After his return from Africa and his period of convalescence, he set about working out the final details of this plan, using the existing VALKYRIE orders, which Olbricht had already adapted for the purposes of the conspiracy.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 365; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 94.

<sup>15</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 846–7.

<sup>16</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 119.

<sup>17</sup> Stahl, 'Blaskowitz', 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 432.

<sup>19</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 335 (1 Sept. 1944), 527 (15 Dec. 1944).

<sup>20</sup> See, to the same effect, Goerdeler in conversation with Robert Bosch: Scholtyssek, *Robert Bosch*, 486; see also Mommsen, 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 583.

<sup>21</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 379.

<sup>22</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 88 (28 July 1944).

These orders, which formed the basis for the attempted coup on the afternoon of 20 July 1944, deliberately took up the theme of 'assumption of executive powers by the army' to prevent unrest within the country. Point 1 in the first telegram sent at approximately 1645h reported that Hitler had lost his life as a result of an attempted coup by an 'unscrupulous clique of Party leaders, who had never served at the front'. Point 2 set out the army's reaction: 'In order to maintain law and order in this hour of greatest danger, the Reich government has declared a military state of emergency and has appointed me commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht with full executive powers.'<sup>23</sup> It is significant that doubts about the situation depicted in the telegram, particularly Hitler's death, were raised in military circles very soon after it was received but, where no such doubts were raised, the VALKYRIE orders were immediately obeyed.<sup>24</sup> So, military commanders had no trouble with the idea of assuming executive powers.

But the army was now completely discredited in the eyes of the regime, which had in any case been steadily cutting back the executive functions of the military—notably in the occupied territories—even before 20 July 1944. So there was now absolutely no possibility of inland security functions being transferred to the army, as Hitler had suggested in talks with Fromm and Stauffenberg on 6 July.<sup>25</sup> Martin Bormann accordingly informed his Gauleiters on 24 July: 'The Führer has explained and emphasized that executive powers are not to be transferred to the Wehrmacht or to any individual generals in an emergency. Such powers must remain firmly in the hands of the Gauleiters, particularly in times of crisis or emergencies affecting our people.'<sup>26</sup> Executive powers on home territory were consequently to be exercised by the Gauleiters as Reich defence commissioners—even in the event of a 'state of siege' in the literal sense of the term, that is in the event of a battle on German territory against invading enemy forces.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. VALKYRIE

The coup d'état was planned as a military putsch by military men with a first-rate general staff officer, Stauffenberg, at their head. What form did the plan for the coup actually take and why, if it was organized on 'general staff lines', did it fail?

The first essential for military planning purposes was to ascertain what forces the system and the conspirators respectively had at their disposal. The plans for a coup d'état in 1938 had shown that considerable forces were

<sup>23</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i.65 (27 July 1944).

<sup>24</sup> Hoffmann, 'Ablauf des Staatsstreichversuches'; Hoffmann, in *History of German Resistance*, ch. XI.3 and XI.4.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 200–1.

<sup>26</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 597 (telex head of Party chancellor Reichsleiter Bormann to all Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, unit commanders, 24 July 1944).

<sup>27</sup> Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 103.



concentrated in the Greater Berlin area to secure the power of the National Socialist government. They included sections of the 'Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler' Waffen-SS division stationed in Berlin-Lichterfelde, as well as armed guards in the SS Death's Head units on duty at Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Oranienburg<sup>28</sup> and the staff manning the Reich security main office. Combat-ready sections of the navy were not available in Berlin<sup>29</sup> but it was to be supposed that substantial anti-aircraft units and Luftwaffe forces would also be in place to defend the Reich capital and that they would certainly not join the rebels—the Luftwaffe was reputedly steeped in National Socialist dogma. However the Luftwaffe ground units were largely immobile and could not be deployed at all, or at least not quickly enough, to support the existing order.

In preparing for a putsch in the autumn of 1938, it had still been possible to count on army combat units that were present in the Berlin-Potsdam area. The 23rd Infantry Division stationed in Potsdam, in particular, and the 9th Infantry Regiment belonging to that division (also on duty in Potsdam in the tradition of the Prussian guards regiments of former times) could be deemed 'safe'. The plans were essentially based on deployment of these formations, which were to advance rapidly on Berlin in a surprise attack.<sup>30</sup> The plans developed in the office of the Reich military intelligence service, the OKW Amt/Ausland Abwehr, between 1938 and 1943 were seriously handicapped by the lack of available troops. The highly qualified but relatively small sections of Maj.-Gen. Alexander von Pfuhlstein's 'Brandenburger' Commando Division did not really constitute a convincing fighting force on their own.<sup>31</sup>

However, the conspiracy had substantial army formations at its disposal when the centre of preparations for a coup moved to the office of the commander of the replacement army. His area of command included the General Army Office, headed since February 1940 by Infantry Gen. Friedrich Olbricht,<sup>32</sup> which was responsible for the territorial structures of the Wehrmacht on home ground (notably the military district headquarters) and also for training establishments and replacement troop units. 'As the senior officer in overall charge of up to 1.8 million men and civilian employees of the Wehrmacht within the Reich and the occupied territories, the commander of the replacement army had the largest armed force on home ground at his disposal.'<sup>33</sup>

The orders to be employed in the coup had already been communicated to the military district headquarters and were to be issued under the code name VALKYRIE. The cover name had originally been used, as already mentioned, in connection with the formation of divisions to serve on the eastern front

<sup>28</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 365; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 826–7

<sup>29</sup> Report by Dr Sydney Jessen, 1946, 2, IFZ, ZS A–29–II, 32. On the marginal role of the marines in the military resistance, see Walle, 'Marineoffiziere'.

<sup>30</sup> Parssinen, *Oster Conspiracy*, 108–10.

<sup>31</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 199–235, also 226–7.

<sup>32</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 100; Page, *General Friedrich Olbricht*; Georgi, 'Wir haben das letzte gewagt'.

<sup>33</sup> Kroener, 'Friedrich Fromm', 171.

in the 1941/2 winter crisis, when men who were deemed fit for active service were released from replacement army troop units and offices and swiftly dispatched to the front.<sup>34</sup> The official reason given for their deployment was not the critical situation in the east but the need to deal quickly with internal unrest. 'Evidently it was thought that the public would respond better to the idea of Wehrmacht formations being used to quell revolts than to the notion that the army in the east needed strengthening—particularly since German propaganda had for months been describing the enemy as "finished".'<sup>35</sup> In July 1942 Hitler, who bore a deep-seated grudge against all 'brass-hats' as a result of his experiences in the First World War, ordered further units to be formed using men from the replacement army.<sup>36</sup>

Whether the plans for the assassination hatched at Army Group Centre in the spring of 1943 were counting on VALKYRIE units to carry out the intended coup d'état must remain an open question.<sup>37</sup> Olbricht, as head of the General Army Office, did not have units of the replacement army at his immediate disposal, and his statement to Fabian von Schlabrendorff ('We are ready. The spark can now be set off')<sup>38</sup> was made when Olbricht and Oster were still the two key figures in the military resistance.<sup>39</sup>

But in the summer of 1943 Olbricht began to change the orders for the VALKYRIE operation to suit the purposes of the military opposition. The first VALKYRIE orders clearly designed to serve the military preparations for the coup d'état were issued on 31 July 1943.<sup>40</sup> At first they appeared to be 'innocuous' from the point of view of the system. Only the strict instruction not to disclose them to anyone outside the Wehrmacht, in other words to refrain from any joint arrangement with internal security bodies such as the police, the Gestapo, or the SS, may have caused a few eyebrows to be raised here and there.<sup>41</sup> The orders really became a fully-fledged instrument of the coup d'état in the autumn of 1943, when Stauffenberg, acting in his new capacity as Olbricht's chief-of-staff in conjunction with Tresckow who was on home leave, set about adding an additional preliminary secret order to the orders already given. This secret order, to be issued only on Day X, opened with the announcement: 'The Führer, Adolf Hitler, is dead!' and was to depict a fictitious situation that would justify military action against political enemies of the state in the eyes of the officers and men involved.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 1019–21; Rathke, '“Walküre”-Divisionen'.

<sup>35</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 1021.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, v/II. 880.

<sup>37</sup> See Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 129, and Page, *General Friedrich Olbricht*, 207.

<sup>38</sup> Schlabrendorff, *Secret War*, 227.

<sup>39</sup> There is no evidence of actual preparations for a coup in connection with the events depicted in Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 131–2, and there is consequently still some doubt about them.

<sup>40</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 160 (Chef HRüst und BdE AHA/1a [I] No. 3830/43 g.Kdos., 31 July 1943 re 'Walküre'). See also Schulenburg's statement to the Gestapo, *ibid.* 88 (28 July 1944).

<sup>41</sup> Chef HRüst und BdE—AHA/1a [I] No. 2830/43 g.Kdos, BA-MA RH 12–21/v. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 219; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 283–4 (21 Aug. 1944).

The orders that were clearly directed against the National Socialist system were the work of a very small circle that included Stauffenberg and Tresckow, and also Maj. (general staff) Hans Ulrich von Oertzen, one of the group of conspirators in Army Group Centre who happened to be in Berlin.<sup>43</sup> At the beginning of October 1943, Stauffenberg told his close friend Kuhn that the plans were not yet complete but that it should be possible to move against Hitler in the course of the month.<sup>44</sup> The number of replacement army troops stationed within the country was falling steadily, and Olbricht had already told Beck and Goerdeler that he doubted whether a sufficient force could now be assembled. It was therefore decided to extend the plans for the VALKYRIE operation to include sections of the field army that happened to be in Germany at the time, for instance on refresher courses.<sup>45</sup> When he was in Berlin in October, Tresckow had a meeting with Goerdeler and Olbricht. It was confirmed that Goerdeler should assume the political and Olbricht the military leadership, as already decided in January.<sup>46</sup> There was no mention at this point of Stauffenberg having a leading role.

Troops other than those in replacement army units were to be allotted a part in the coup only under special conditions. In Paris, for example, the military commander in France, Gen. Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, was to use his men to eliminate the forces supporting the system and create the necessary conditions to end the war quickly—a task that should not be too difficult as an Allied invasion looked increasingly likely.<sup>47</sup> Philipp Freiherr von Boeselager reports that his brother Georg planned to transport cavalry units from Army Group Centre to Berlin by air to secure the coup. Where the necessary aircraft were to come from has never been explained.<sup>48</sup>

The VALKYRIE orders as amended in the summer/autumn of 1943 marked a structural change in the plans for the coup. Ever since 1938, the intention had been to rely on troops whose commanders were considered to be 'safe'. But it was impossible to keep this up as the war proceeded, commanders were frequently posted or replaced, forces redeployed, and, above all, the 'Abwehr' and with it the 'Brandenburger' Commando Division dropped out. Instead, under the VALKYRIE orders, it became necessary to fall back on any troops and staff available on Reich territory, who were to be commandeered for the purposes of the coup on the strength of their subordinate position in the hierarchy, that is to say on the strength of military discipline.

In the military districts, Stauffenberg—in so far as he had been able to get hold of the necessary personnel—had appointed a liaison officer and a political officer to coordinate the actual coup and secure united political action in the

<sup>43</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 109.

<sup>44</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 380.

<sup>45</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 157–8 (6 Aug. 1944), 283–4 (21 Aug. 1944); Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 109; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 199–200.

<sup>46</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 124; Aretin, 'Henning von Tresckow', 301.

<sup>47</sup> IfZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, fo. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Witte and Offermann, *Die Boeselagerschen Reiter*, 252.

early stages. The relevant lists were subsequently found in the course of the Gestapo investigations, and provided an important basis for the arrests made after 20 July.<sup>49</sup> Where he felt he could, Stauffenberg had also approached the commanders of troops that might be used as part of the military force to secure the putsch. Military district I (East Prussia), for example, was a key district: it contained the Führer's headquarters and by the summer of 1944, with the collapse of Army Group Centre, it was also quite close to the front line. So the plan was that Hößlin should proceed with his battalion-strength motorized force from Insterburg to Königsberg and secure the military district headquarters with the assistance of the liaison officer, Lt. Heinrich Graf Lehndorff.<sup>50</sup> After the attempted coup, the investigators learned that the military preparations were on the whole fairly complete.<sup>51</sup> An army formation, the 'Großdeutschland' replacement brigade stationed at Cottbus, was to be brought in to stop SS formations advancing from Thüringen. Oertzen inspected the brigade on 17 July 1944 to make sure it was ready for action.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to their military plans, the conspirators had also sought support among the upper echelons of the Reich police, but had failed to win over any really important people, only officials who were relatively powerless despite their impressive titles. Notable examples were the Berlin police chief, Helldorff, and the head of the criminal police, Nebe.<sup>53</sup> At least these two provided the odd item of useful information, and it was clear that neither of them would take any steps against a coup. But Helldorff was nevertheless sceptical about the prospects of one—and downright 'defeatist' about his own ability to do anything.<sup>54</sup> Helldorff's conduct on 20 July 1944 is therefore to be described as hesitant if not ambivalent, while Nebe, in the absence of instructions from Helldorff, had no occasion to order the twenty criminal police officials who had advance notice of the coup to make any arrests.<sup>55</sup>

How far the army itself was a force to be reckoned with was in many respects an open question. Stauffenberg relied on the strength of the military chain of command but failed to take account of the extent to which the army had changed as a result of the 'manipulation of the elite' that formed its inner core. The commander of military district III, who was responsible for Berlin, and his subordinate the military governor of the city, would have a key role. However the chief-of-staff Maj.-Gen. Hans Günther von Rost, who knew about the conspiracy, was posted to the front shortly before 20 July 1944. The commander, Gen. Joachim von Kortzfleisch, was thought to be favourably disposed to the regime, but his immediate superior, Olbricht, assumed for planning purposes that he would execute all orders from the General Army Office and in particular

<sup>49</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 26–8 (24 July 1944), 145 (5 Aug. 1944).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 257 (18 Aug. 1944), 372 (9 Sept. 1944).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 35–6 (24 July 1944).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 158 (6 Aug. 1944).

<sup>53</sup> Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 423; Rathert, *Verbrechen und Verschwörung*, IfZ, ED 88/2, coll. Zeller, 335.

<sup>54</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 493.

<sup>55</sup> Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 417–19; Rathert, *Verbrechen und Verschwörung*, 142–3.

that he would call in military district III troops stationed outside Berlin (in Potsdam, for example) as and when required. But when the time came Kortz-fleisch refused to obey orders for the benefit of the conspirators, and so did the new chief-of-staff, Maj.-Gen. Otto Herfurth. The General Army Office managed to rustle up emergency forces by telephone, bypassing military district headquarters and making direct calls to the most important units, armoured troops in training at Krampnitz, and infantry in training at Döberitz (both located west of Berlin), units from the 'Großdeutschland' replacement brigade at Cottbus, the artillery school at Jüterbog, and the 6th panzer regiment at Alt-Ruppin.<sup>56</sup> But these efforts had no practical effect, as the situation for the conspirators was deteriorating rapidly.<sup>57</sup>

In the weeks before 20 July 1944, Stauffenberg was repeatedly warned against the new guards battalion commander, Maj. Otto Ernst Remer. He was known to be a fanatical Nazi, and it was by no means sure that he readily would allow himself to become involved in the coup.<sup>58</sup> Beck himself expressed similar reservations to Olbricht. However, a fellow-conspirator, Lt.-Gen. Paul von Hase, pointed out that Remer, who was his subordinate, had recently received and accepted a sharp reprimand. To replace the major, who had only just been appointed, would attract unwanted attention, so he was left holding his key position. This was yet another instance of trust in the traditional values of military discipline.<sup>59</sup> Remer's role in quelling the insurgence in Berlin on the afternoon of 20 July 1944 proved this to be a false assumption.

Another remarkable fact is that radio hardly featured at all in the plans for the coup in Berlin. It is not clear whether the König Wusterhausen radio transmitter in south-east Berlin, briefly occupied by the 'Großdeutschland' replacement brigade, continued to broadcast.<sup>60</sup> A small force did occupy the radio studios on the Masurenallee, which were practically in the direct path of the troops advancing from Döberitz, but that did not stop forces loyal to the regime from continuing to broadcast.<sup>61</sup> Stauffenberg and the other general staff officers do not appear to have been fully aware of the potential power of radio for mobilizing the masses, although Goebbels had provided more than adequate demonstration of the fact.

All the military plans were strictly secret. The danger that some careless act might attract the attention of the authorities, or even of 'unreliable' friends, was simply too great. Ernst Jünger reports from Paris that the conspirators

<sup>56</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 220–1, with reference to Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 271, and several first-hand reports by those involved; see also *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 22 (24 July 1944). It is impossible now to ascertain whether armoured troop units in training at Wünsdorf actually set out.

<sup>57</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 234; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 571–601.

<sup>58</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 216–17; Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 417; Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 480, in which Gisevius is primarily concerned to portray Stauffenberg as an incompetent soldier.

<sup>59</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 216–17; also, to the same effect, Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 108.

<sup>60</sup> See Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 271.

<sup>61</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 231–2; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 509–14.

did not feel safe in their own offices, even when the telephone receivers were off the hook. Really secret conversations were conducted during walks in the city's parks.<sup>62</sup> The strictest secrecy of all was probably observed in the screening at Army Group Centre. Even Tresckow's close associates and fellow-conspirators report that they were informed of plans only when it was absolutely necessary and then only to the extent that was really essential.<sup>63</sup> The names of a considerable number of people in this circle do not appear at all in the records of Gestapo investigations. Lt.-Col. Georg Freiherr von Boeselager, for example, who was already supposed to support an assassination with his cavalry units in 1943, was clearly never connected with the attempted coup. On the contrary, he was posthumously promoted to the rank of colonel and awarded the Knight's Cross with Swords after his death in action on the eastern front in August.<sup>64</sup>

The conspirators' contacts with the police at least provided a very effective advance warning system if any member of the group happened to fall foul of the SD or the Gestapo. Thus, Capt. Gehre of the Abwehr was able to slip away when he was about to be arrested. It was also known that Stauffenberg's man in Madrid, the Luftwaffe lawyer Otto John, was under surveillance.<sup>65</sup> All in all, it was generally assumed by 1942 at the latest that, in view of the conflict between the SD and the OKW foreign intelligence office, members of the Abwehr, particularly Oster, could expect their comings and goings to be monitored.<sup>66</sup> Nebe, as the conspirators' contact with the criminal police until shortly before 20 July, played a particularly important part, informing them that Goerdeler was being sought by the police and so enabling him to disappear. However, the news also increased the time pressure on Stauffenberg, who now had to reckon with the prospect that the chief civilian conspirator might be arrested at any moment—and that it could then be only a matter of days before the entire conspiracy was exposed.<sup>67</sup>

Caution was essential in Berlin, too. Hase, the commander of the city, was particularly important to the coup. He was reputed to be 'good resistance material', having been critical of the regime since 1938, but he was informed of the conspiracy only at a late stage, and then only bit by bit. He appears to have been apprised of the basics by 1943,<sup>68</sup> but was not given details of the plan for Berlin until 15 July 1944 when VALKYRIE was actually launched.<sup>69</sup> Other 'established' opponents of the regime were not informed at all.<sup>70</sup> They included Lt.-Col. Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, who was to have made the attempt

<sup>62</sup> Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 235–6.

<sup>63</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 82, 126.

<sup>64</sup> Witte and Offermann, *Die Boeselagerschen Reiter*; IFZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, fo. 104.

<sup>65</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 225 (15 Aug. 1944).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 285–6 (22 Aug. 1944).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 205, 213–14.

<sup>69</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 48 (25 July 1944), 158 (6 Aug. 1944); IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881–PS, 482–4.

<sup>70</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 228, Meinl, *Nationalsozialisten gegen Hitler*, 332–3.



on Hitler's life in 1938, had subsequently served in Abwehr combat units, and now held an important post in charge of the Wehrmacht street patrols in the capital. It is impossible to know how many others who were supposed to assume important functions in the organization of the coup according to the conspirators' plans were given only belated or incomplete information.

It is very difficult to imagine in hindsight the conditions under which planning had to proceed, the ever-present threat and the regular work that had to be done at the same time. All officers on active service had demanding and exhausting tasks to perform in the fifth year of the war, and the constant air raids on Berlin added to the burden. The exigencies of the conspiracy meant that the conspirators had to take on additional duties themselves and that important meetings had to be held in houses located in various places round Berlin. Graf von Hardenberg's chateau at Neuhardenberg, not far east of Berlin, was a particular favourite: they were in no danger from the Gestapo or air raids there, and there was also enough to eat.<sup>71</sup> Other options, such as breakfast in a hotel or a walk in the zoo, where they could at least be sure that they would not be overheard although they would be seen together, were still open in 1940 but had to be abandoned later for security reasons.<sup>72</sup>

Carl Goerdeler played a peculiar role in this connection. Many of his fellow-conspirators felt he represented a security risk because he had a wide circle of friends and acquaintances and was inclined to be talkative, and he was probably cut out of the loop in the phase immediately prior to 20 July. There had been rumours in June 1943 that action might be taken against Goerdeler,<sup>73</sup> and in the early summer of 1944 Nebe, who was exceptionally cautious, flatly refused to meet him at all.<sup>74</sup> The Gestapo interrogation reports confirm that Goerdeler had been an active conspirator. But the fact remains that he had authorized Otto John, for example, to inform Spanish officials and the Hohenzollern monarch, Prince Louis Ferdinand, of the conspiracy when there was no need to do so. And it had been equally rash to inform the mayor of Stuttgart, Karl Strölin, who had been a staunch National Socialist in earlier days.<sup>75</sup>

Knowledge of the proposed coup was confined to a small circle, and the conspirators had very astutely combined the plans in this connection with Wehrmacht plans that were ostensibly perfectly legitimate from the point of view of the regime. In view of the actual power structure in the Reich, this was probably the only approach that had offered any prospect of success. However, the forces at their disposal were extremely small, they were obliged to bring in a number of dubious people who were 'unsafe' for planning purposes, and they relied more than ever on the traditional structures of military discipline.

<sup>71</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 433; Goebel, 'Ein Preuße im Widerstand'; Hardenberg, *Auf immer neuen Wegen, passim*.

<sup>72</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 167.

<sup>73</sup> Müller, *Oberst i. G. Stauffenberg*, 374, 434; Scholtyseck, *Robert Bosch*, 485.

<sup>74</sup> Rathert, *Verbrechen und Verschwörung*, 142–4.

<sup>75</sup> John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 28; Scholtyseck, *Robert Bosch*, 475.



This was a revolt by senior members of the traditional military elite against a regime whose own 'revolution' had already gained widespread acceptance in the ranks.

### 3. RECRUITMENT

The conspiracy nevertheless succeeded in concealing the whole elaborate plan from the Gestapo until 20 July 1944, that is to say until it was revealed by the attempted assassination and coup. The secret police had to explain how it could possibly have allowed such an assassination to be attempted and such an extensive conspiracy to be mounted after eleven years of National Socialist rule.<sup>76</sup> We must now consider how so many people could be assembled without betraying the conspiracy.

The attempts to mount a coup in 1938 and 1939 had been predicated on action by the generals, either in the form of a 'strike' or a united protest. Members of the military opposition had turned to the senior ranks of the army high command, but all these efforts had ultimately failed because the generals, with only a few exceptions, would have no part of it. It is true that many middle-ranking officials in other elite departments of the Third Reich, such as the diplomatic service, were convinced of the need for a coup, but it proved impossible to persuade any of the central decision-makers to make any overt move against Hitler.<sup>77</sup>

The conspiracy deliberately and systematically organized by Goerdeler after 1941 relied mainly on civil dignitaries, for the most part officials who had retired in the early years of the regime. However, the relative absence of serving officers, and the consequent lack of the real instruments of power required for a coup, invested the whole enterprise with an air of unreality. The transition from discussing the ideal form and purpose of the state to putting these ideas into action was never really made.<sup>78</sup> Goerdeler sought out people for this somewhat loose-knit discussion group who, he thought, 'might not agree with National Socialism'. Thus the main criterion for selection was the presumption of opposition.<sup>79</sup> Under the conditions of surveillance obtaining in a totalitarian state, his actions were undoubtedly extremely risky. The Rhineland centre party politician and former mayor of Cologne Konrad Adenauer, for instance, considered Goerdeler's recruitment policy to be 'lethal'.<sup>80</sup> Goerdeler's attempts to recruit military men were also marked by his idea (which he never really abandoned) that Hitler must be secured first and the German people mobilized against him after that. Even in Gestapo

<sup>76</sup> Bielenberg, *The Past Is Myself*, 240.

<sup>77</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 87, 94.

<sup>78</sup> Mommsen, 'Bürgerlicher Widerstand', 58.

<sup>79</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 313–14, quotation 313 (29 Aug. 1944); Scholtyssek, *Robert Bosch*, 473. For the economic policy ideas of Goerdeler and his close associates, including Bosch, see the more recent work by Rüther, *Widerstand*.

<sup>80</sup> Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, 275.

custody, he continued to maintain that what he had really wanted was to oblige Hitler to step down by a combination of 'fact, and free expression of the people's will'.<sup>81</sup> In Goerdeler's view, Rommel, for example, whom he had been at some pains to contact—at some risk to himself—through the mayor of Stuttgart, Strölin, was more important as a 'popular commander' than as a potential authority once the war on the western front was over.<sup>82</sup>

So when, in 1942, Goerdeler began to make more energetic efforts to persuade officers to join 'his' conspiracy,<sup>83</sup> there was never any question about the subordinate role of the military in the carefully constructed political scenario. His increasingly sharp conflict with Stauffenberg in the summer of 1944 arose primarily from the fact that the young general staff officer refused to accept that he was simply the executive arm of Goerdeler's policy.<sup>84</sup> Conversely, the former mayor of Leipzig regarded Stauffenberg as 'a high-minded general staff officer, who had been seriously wounded in Africa and somehow got it into his head that he would like to try his hand at politics as well'.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the civilian head of the conspiracy was becoming a security risk. In June 1944, Goerdeler protested by letter against Stauffenberg's contacts with workers' leaders. This broke all the rules of the conspiracy. A fierce argument ensued, settled only with some difficulty at a crisis meeting held in the Hotel Esplanade on 16 June 1944.<sup>86</sup> Goerdeler's rash conduct, particularly the way he went about recruiting supporters, increasingly alienated him from the closest conspirators. Even Beck asked the former mayor of Leipzig not to visit him any more.<sup>87</sup> Goerdeler had assembled a substantial circle of people opposed to the regime, and had produced a complete alternative national-conservative programme to replace the criminal National Socialist regime; he had not created an efficient organization for the purposes of a coup d'état.

Tresckow, in Army Group Centre, had adopted a different approach. By pursuing a perspicacious personnel policy, he had assembled a small but resolute circle of officers, who were prepared to assassinate Hitler and thus create the necessary conditions for the coup although, to keep the secret, those least involved were not fully informed of all the connections, particularly Tresckow's links with the Reich.<sup>88</sup> Tresckow's friendship with the head of the army personnel office, Maj.-Gen. Rudolf Schmundt, was of course useful. Even so, the personnel policy moves were not always successful. In particular, his

<sup>81</sup> Memorandum 'Unsere Idee' (after 9 Nov. 1944), cited in Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 400.

<sup>82</sup> Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 82; Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 344–5; Krautkrämer, 'Hans Speidel', 248–9.

<sup>83</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 283 (21 Aug. 1944), 349 (4 Sept. 1944); Aretin, 'Henning von Tresckow', 301; Ueberschär, 'Henning von Tresckow', 260.

<sup>84</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 121.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum 'Unsere Idee' (after 9 Nov. 1944), cited in Goerdeler, *Politische Schriften*, i, LIII.

<sup>86</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 118 (1 Aug. 1944).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 362 (7 Sept. 1944).

<sup>88</sup> Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 82, 94; Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 449; Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 122.

attempt to obtain a transfer to the army high command, and so get closer to the centre of power, failed.<sup>89</sup> And the army commanders on the eastern front continued to resist all overtures. Tresckow's own commander, Kluge, proved to be ambivalent and Manstein—despite his sweeping criticisms of the Nazi regime—was unapproachable.<sup>90</sup>

Tresckow and Goerdeler were in closer contact after the spring of 1943, despite their political and programmatic differences. They relied mainly on Oster and Lt. Fabian von Schlabrendorff, the lawyer on the staff of Army Group Centre. Assassination and coup began to look feasible again when the head of the General Army Office, Olbricht, under the impact of the disaster unfolding at Stalingrad, said he would be prepared to take over the conduct of the coup within the country if the assassination to be organized by Army Group Centre was successful.<sup>91</sup>

Tresckow did not rely exclusively on general staff officers.<sup>92</sup> He also brought a whole body of reserve officers into the conspiracy under his control, turning for preference to officers from his own regiment, the 9th Potsdam Infantry Regiment, true to the tradition of the Prussian guards. The many old names such as Schlabrendorff, Lehndorff, Hardenberg, Kleist, Oppeln, Bussche, Hammerstein, and others, bear testimony to the close ties between them. Tresckow had also created a readily accessible and in his view reliable fighting force in the form of Lt.-Col. Georg Freiherr von Boeselager's cavalry regiment.

But it was also clear to Tresckow that, in view of the increasing Soviet pressure on the fronts, the coup could not be mounted from the eastern front. All attempts to organize the 'initial spark', i.e. the assassination of Hitler, in the east failed because 'the greatest field commander of all time' no longer came anywhere near the front, indeed had not even visited any army group headquarters since the summer of 1943. Tresckow therefore sought allies among the military in Berlin, notably in the army high command and the general staff. An early ally was Hellmuth Stieff, who served under Heusinger in the operations section of the army general staff and was subsequently head of the organization section.<sup>93</sup> Stieff had long been convinced of the essential amorality of the Nazi regime in view of the crimes it had perpetrated in the east, and was at one time considered as a possible assassin because he had access to Hitler. But in the end he could not bring himself to do the tyrant to death,

<sup>89</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 267–8; Klaus, 'Preußische Soldatentradiition', 533; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 104–5.

<sup>90</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 88 (28 July 1944); Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 348, 351; Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 451; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Generalfeldmarschall Günther von Kluge'; id., *Der Verschwörer*, 222; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 180.

<sup>91</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 123; Mommsen, *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 16; Ueberschär, 'Henning von Tresckow', 259–60; Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 450; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 181; Aretin, 'Henning von Tresckow', 301; Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 219; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 349 (4 Sept. 1944).

<sup>92</sup> Schieder is wrong about this. See Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 441–2.

<sup>93</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 345.

even when Stauffenberg repeatedly urged him to do so.<sup>94</sup> Until the summer of 1943, the staff at Army Group Centre and the Amt Ausland/Abwehr foreign intelligence office were the two centres of military planning for a coup. After Kluge's serious car accident on 12 October 1943,<sup>95</sup> Tresckow's posting at the end of July 1943 (after a spell of home leave, he took command of a regiment briefly in October 1943, before taking up an appointment as chief of the Second Army general staff in November), and the gradual destruction of the Abwehr by the SS security service, it became necessary to devise completely new structures—and recruit new conspirators.

A thorny point was the recruiting of members of the opposition who were particularly clearly identified with the regime—and often also with its crimes. This certainly applied to the head of the army legal department in the OKH, Judge Advocate-General Karl Sack, who held a prominent position in the Wehrmacht judicial system and was involved at the same time in the preparations for the coup d'état, and even more to Nebe, Helldorff, and Gisevius, who had been engaged in police work. Gisevius' comments on the other conspirators' attitude towards Helldorff doubtless applied equally to all three: 'They were well acquainted with every aspect of the man, including his less agreeable traits.'<sup>96</sup> But he was held to be indispensable.<sup>97</sup> Helldorff certainly had some less agreeable traits: he was corrupt, a rake, and a spendthrift, the very epitome of the National Socialist 'Party boss' figure that Goerdeler had sworn to bring down, and his main motive for joining the military opposition was bitterness over his lack of advancement.<sup>98</sup> Helldorff, Nebe, Gisevius, and Helldorff's deputy, Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg, a man of strict Prussian moral and professional principles, were old acquaintances, having worked together since the early 1930s.<sup>99</sup> Gisevius had represented the police chief on the committee responsible for organizing the 1936 Olympic Games.

Unlike Goerdeler, Stauffenberg was primarily concerned with the practical contribution potential participants might make to the coup. Their views were of secondary importance. There are nevertheless indications that Stauffenberg did not inform these dubious allies of all the plans, and that he intended to break with them after the coup.<sup>100</sup> His recruitment policy was governed entirely by the 'requirements' of the coup. His aim was not to win as many converts as possible, but to ensure that key positions were held by

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 351; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 89 (28 July 1944); Stieff's interrogation before the people's court in IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 309.

<sup>95</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 350; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Generalfeldmarschall Günther von Kluge', 46 (28 Oct. mentioned there, in error).

<sup>96</sup> Haase, 'Generalstabsrichter Karl Sack', 205-6.

<sup>97</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 343; *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, introduction, p.xxv.

<sup>98</sup> Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 410; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 479 (2 Nov. 1944).

<sup>99</sup> Rathert, *Verbrechen und Verschwörung*, 141.

<sup>100</sup> Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 417-18, based on *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 99 (30 July 1944); Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 468.

people he could trust.<sup>101</sup> Stauffenberg employed a standard tactical approach in his talks with officers. He started with professional considerations that must have been familiar to most senior officers in the fifth year of the war. He then dwelt on the need for 'change'—being careful not to specify what form it should take. If his interlocutor agreed, he would ask whether the necessary changes could conceivably be made with Hitler at the helm. Once admit that this would be impossible and the logical conclusion was that action would have to be taken against the Führer.<sup>102</sup>

Stauffenberg had given free rein to his inclination to oppose the regime in casual conversation with close friends before he was posted to North Africa (Roland von Hößlin, for example, who got the impression from a conversation in March 1943 that Stauffenberg was just 'another OKH pessimist').<sup>103</sup> But in the winter of 1943/4, after the theoretical foundations had been laid in the form of the over-elaborate VALKYRIE orders, he proceeded to concentrate his activities on general staff lines. Referring to a conversation with Stauffenberg in mid summer 1943, Kuhn was later to say: 'At that point, Stauffenberg had not given any thought to the actual form of the organization.' It was a different story when they met again in October 1943: 'Your role will be to act as 1st officer to General Stieff . . . i.e. to prepare the headquarters mobilization plans.'<sup>104</sup>

Stauffenberg quickly assembled the officers required to organize the coup in the military districts, drawing primarily on comrades from general-staff training days, his wide circle of friends and relations, and members of his original regiment, the 17th Cavalry Regiment in Bamberg, which was thus destined, along with the 9th Potsdam Infantry Regiment, to pay the highest price for resistance.<sup>105</sup> In mid-December 1943, he called Maj. Ludwig Freiherr von Leonrod, a member of his old regiment who was serving in military district VII (Munich), to Berlin and persuaded him to join the opposition,<sup>106</sup> and on 20 December 1943, Capt. Friedrich Scholz-Babisch from military district VIII was a 'guest' at the Bendlerblock.<sup>107</sup> However, Capt. Dietrich Freiherr Truchseß von Wetzhausen, summoned to Berlin from Nuremberg (military district XIII) in January 1944, refused to join in and an alternative appointment Stauffenberg had in mind also failed to materialize. This was not reported to the authorities, as Stauffenberg knew he could always rely on 'the professional solidarity of fellow-officers to prevent disclosure of "treasonable" talk even

<sup>101</sup> On Stauffenberg's activities, see also Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 202–4.

<sup>102</sup> Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 8–9.

<sup>103</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 373 (9 Sept. 1944); see, to the same effect, conversation with Kuhn when he visited him in hospital in Munich: statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 379.

<sup>104</sup> Both cited in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 380. Stieff was not yet a general in October 1943.

<sup>105</sup> Kageneck, *Die Bamberger Reiter*, 142–61; Krolak, 'Weg zum Neuen Reich', 546. This strategy explains the high proportion of aristocrats among the conspirators—an aspect that is not taken into account in Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, ch. 12.6.

<sup>106</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 258–9 (18 Aug. 1944).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 312 (29 Aug. 1944).

when one of the parties would have nothing to do with the coup'.<sup>108</sup> Lt.-Col. Hans Erdmann from Königsberg was won over by an almost identical line of talk.<sup>109</sup> In all these discussions, Stauffenberg enjoyed the advantage of a sharp intellect and widely acknowledged charisma, qualities that even gained him a measure of respect among members of the Gestapo.<sup>110</sup>

Stauffenberg recruited other conspirators in the same way from the ranks of the army high command and the general staff. Here too, he could call on men who had already been involved in earlier conspiracies. This applied to Gen. Erich Fellgiebel of the Signal Corps, for example, or the quartermaster general of the army, Gen. Eduard Wagner. Others, who had formed the nucleus of the military opposition from 1938 to 1940, were no longer available. Groscurth, for example, had died in a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp after Stalingrad.<sup>111</sup> Yet others had been assigned different duties. Stülpnagel, who had then been 2nd quartermaster, was now part of the conspiracy in France, and Tresckow—as we know—had been posted to Army Group Centre.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, Gen. Olbricht had joined the resistance group in March 1942. The support of the head of the General Army Office opened up the possibility of using home-based army units in the coup. In the summer of 1943, Olbricht who was prone to procrastination had once more found in his new chief of staff, the resolute Stauffenberg, the very man he needed to pursue the plans for the coup with new energy. Stauffenberg immediately set about winning allies among his new colleagues. In February 1944, he managed to bring an Austrian head of section in the General Army Office, Lt.-Col. (general staff) Robert Bernardis, into the organization to act as central link-man between Berlin and Vienna.<sup>113</sup> In April or May, Stauffenberg approached 1st Lt. Graf Lehndorff. He was known to be opposed to the regime, and the army high command was located on his estates at 'Mauerwald' in East Prussia.<sup>114</sup> The recruitment activities known to the Gestapo alone give some idea of the system and the enormous efforts made by Stauffenberg, already strained to breaking point under the burden of his normal duties—and that does not include the countless unsuccessful and unrecorded attempts to recruit support.

Stauffenberg did occasionally let others make the first approach—and Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg had a special role as the 'driving force in the recruitment campaign'<sup>115</sup>—but he felt it was important that he himself should obtain the final commitment from those joining the conspiracy.<sup>116</sup> For

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 312 (29 Aug. 1944); Graml, 'Militärischer Widerstand', 92; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 161–2.

<sup>109</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 307 (26 Aug. 1944).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 169 (7 Aug. 1944), 305–6 (26 Aug. 1944); Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports*, 55–6.

<sup>111</sup> Groscurth, 'Christ—Patriot—Soldat', 22.

<sup>112</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 166.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 420; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 19 (24 July 1944).

<sup>114</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 257 (18 Aug. 1944).

<sup>115</sup> Mommsen, *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 28.

<sup>116</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 22, which sees this as an important role of Schulenburg's but fails to note that the 'reserve officers (Schulenburg, Yorck), military officials (Moltke), or special leaders (Bonhoeffer, Dohnanyi)' mentioned in the plans for the coup in the summer of 1944 no longer played a central role.



example, Stauffenberg's adjutant Werner von Haefen had talks with Capt. Friedrich Karl Klausing in April 1944. When Klausing showed an interest, a meeting was arranged with Stauffenberg himself, Klausing was asked whether he wanted to join, and he said yes, he did.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, one of Hößlin's subordinates reports that his new commander was surprisingly, almost overwhelmingly, keen to talk about the atrocities perpetrated by the SS and the Gestapo, but that he was actually admitted to the conspiracy itself by Stauffenberg in Berlin.<sup>118</sup> Lt.-Col. Erdmann, who had been recruited by Stauffenberg, talked to a number of officers about the catastrophic war situation, but failed to evoke the desired response and wisely decided to let the subject drop.<sup>119</sup> The need for cover produced some strange circumlocutions, spitefully recorded by the Gestapo: 'In response to Blumenthal's concern that something might happen, some action might be taken without the Führer's consent or even against him, Haefen cunningly replied that the question of a military state of emergency would only arise if the Führer was no longer alive.'<sup>120</sup>

Stauffenberg included civilians in the plans for the coup only where necessary, although he thought the succeeding government should be mainly civilian. One civilian recruit was the Lufthansa representative in Madrid, Otto John. John had already been in contact with the conspirators in the Abwehr, and was a putative member of the Goerdeler circle when Stauffenberg gave him a specific task to perform in November 1943: he was to ensure that any communications from Stauffenberg would reach the supreme Allied commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, or the British without delay.<sup>121</sup> Stauffenberg also talked to the 'politicians', who were only indirectly involved in the preparations for the coup d'état but who were to secure the necessary popular backing for the new government.<sup>122</sup>

Individual postings could sometimes be arranged so that those who had already joined the conspiracy were placed in positions where they could make a more effective contribution to the coup. Any gaps this created in the organization were filled, where possible, by new recruits. When Leonrod was to be transferred from Munich to Berlin, he suggested to Stauffenberg that Max Ulrich Graf von Drechsel might succeed him, though of course the proposal had to be expressly approved by the head of the coup organization.<sup>123</sup> Members who left the organization were cut off and received no further information. Peter Sauerbruch, a member of Stauffenberg's regiment, is an example. He was called to Berlin by Stauffenberg in December 1943, but was offered

<sup>117</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 147 (5 Aug. 1944).

<sup>118</sup> Officer Hubertus Schulz's recollections of a meeting with Maj. Roland von Hößlin at Ins-terburg in the early summer of 1944, in Kagenack, *Zwischen Eid und Gewissen*, 194-6.

<sup>119</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 314 (29 Aug. 1944).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 336 (1 Sept. 1944).

<sup>121</sup> Stöver, 'Otto John', 167.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, conversations with Julius Leber and Jakob Kaiser in May and June 1944, in John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 56; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 118 (1 Aug. 1944), 127 (2 Aug. 1944).

<sup>123</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 259 (18 Aug. 1944), where he is mistakenly referred to as 'Drexel'.



the coveted post of operations officer in a division on the eastern front in the spring of 1944 and heard no more from Stauffenberg thereafter.<sup>124</sup> Stauffenberg made no direct attempt to win support in areas that could not be of direct use in carrying out the coup. As regards the navy, he simply enquired through his brother Berthold,<sup>125</sup> a naval commander and judge in the maritime law section of the navy high command who was also involved in the conspiracy, whether the independent naval communications links could be used for the coup. When it became clear that that would not be feasible, no further attempts were made to recruit support.<sup>126</sup>

Altogether, Stauffenberg's recruitment policy was as successful as could have been hoped in the circumstances. At a time when the officer corps had lost much of its inner cohesion, and even U-boat crews were turning on their commanders,<sup>127</sup> it was almost incredible that none of those who were approached, not even those who refused to cooperate, reported the conspirators' intentions. The 'personnel policy',<sup>128</sup> adapted in the light of changing circumstances, was vigorously pursued up to 20 July 1944 and not complete even then. Stauffenberg approached Lt. Urban Thiersch for the first time in July 1944,<sup>129</sup> Lt.-Gen. Paul von Hase and his adjutant, Maj. Egbert von Hayessen, were only given their instructions on 15 July,<sup>130</sup> and there were still no political agents or liaison officers in a number of military districts.

One of the conspiracy's serious flaws was the fact that it was the brainchild of colonels and junior generals. Renowned military men were not prepared to take the lead, even as figureheads, and the few four-star generals who might have been considered (notably Beck and Hoepner) had retired from active service long ago, and Hoepner had been given a dishonourable discharge.<sup>131</sup> The only field marshal who figured in the plan, Erwin von Witzleben, had on health grounds not held any command since March 1942.<sup>132</sup> However, the distinction between 'senior' and 'junior' lines does not always apply.<sup>133</sup> The decisive factor after the autumn of 1943 was the deliberate decision, influenced by Tresckow and above all by Stauffenberg, to select people on the

<sup>124</sup> According to Sauerbruch, 'Bericht', 267, and *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 286 (22 Aug. 1944), this also applied to Oster but in his case it was also assumed that he was under surveillance.

<sup>125</sup> On Berthold Graf Stauffenberg, whose role in the resistance cannot be considered in detail here, see Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, and Vitzthum, 'Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg'.

<sup>126</sup> Report by Dr Sydney Jessen, 1946, 2, IfZ, ZS A-29-II, 32.

<sup>127</sup> On the case of Lt. Oskar Kusch, see Walle, *Die Tragödie des Oberleutnants zur See Oskar Kusch*; on the subject of denunciation in the context of military solidarity, see Kühne, 'Der Judenretter', 34.

<sup>128</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 96 (29 July 1944); see also Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 110.

<sup>129</sup> Report by former artillery lieutenant Urban Thiersch on his meeting with Col. Graf Stauffenberg in July 1944 (recorded Munich 1949), IfZ, ED 88/2, coll. Zeller, fos. 333-6.

<sup>130</sup> IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 482-4; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 213; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 47 (25 July 1944).

<sup>131</sup> Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 311.

<sup>132</sup> Mueller, 'Generalfeldmarschall Erwin von Witzleben', 268.

<sup>133</sup> See, to the same effect, Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', and Schwerin, 'Weg der "Jungen Generation"'. For a more accurate account, see the Gestapo investigators: *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 177 (9 Aug. 1944), 205; and Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 137.

basis of functions and irrespective of age, witness the involvement of Beck, Witzleben, and Hoepner. A new and distinct resistance group was formed, in which 'senior' and 'junior' were happy to join forces, especially where it made sense to 'include' representatives of the 'senior' line for practical purposes.<sup>134</sup> The systematic 'exclusion' of others, notably Goerdeler, was mainly designed to keep the whole enterprise secret and also to prepare the ground for a political alternative to earlier ideas that were now felt to be too conservative.<sup>135</sup> 'Military opposition'<sup>136</sup> is by no means a bad name for this new group, but the term 'military dictatorship' is frequently applied to Stauffenberg.<sup>137</sup>

The fact that Stauffenberg employed staff officers and subordinates to act as link-men with the military districts is further evidence of the extent to which he depended on the operation of the traditional military chain of command. His liaison officers could try to influence their commanders and they could provide Stauffenberg with a rapid and accurate picture of the situation—but they could not deploy troops.

Stauffenberg also had the foresight to keep the full details of the plan secret from many of the conspirators, and to simply inform them of the aspects that were relevant for their purposes. Helldorff's experience was no exception in this respect.<sup>138</sup> His own cousin Hofacker 'objected . . . to Stauffenberg's principle, fully justified in the case of a conspiracy, that people must only be told what they absolutely need to know in order to do their job'.<sup>139</sup> A considerable number of those arrested after 20 July stated under interrogation that they knew Stauffenberg was making preparations for a political change, but they certainly had no idea that it was planned to assassinate Hitler. This may have been simply a tactical move on the part of prisoners about to be sentenced and executed, but the topos recurs too often to be dismissed out of hand. Even the Gestapo assumed that 'a great many people were more or less fully informed of the plans to overthrow the regime by force'.<sup>140</sup> However, Field Marshal von Witzleben had been party to the preparations for a coup in 1938 but he did not meet Stauffenberg until May or June 1944, and he seemed to be surprised to learn on 20 July that his name appeared on the telegram

<sup>134</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 119.

<sup>135</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 118 (1 Aug. 1944); Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 471; Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 124.

<sup>136</sup> For a different—but mistaken—view, see Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 987. Steinbach suggests that only his evaluation, which disregards the objection of military dictatorship, 'allowed useful and pertinent discussion of the resistance with due attention to the constitutional aspects which have hitherto determined our thinking about the limitations and justifications of resistance' (994). Steinbach's interpretation is necessary for a rational and integral appreciation of the resistance as the founding myth of the Federal Republic; but it is the business of intellectually critical historiography to question such a teleological meaning.

<sup>137</sup> For example, in the case of Stauffenberg's visit to Kuhn at the beginning of February 1942, Chavkin and Kalanov, 'Neue Quellen', 379 (statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944).

<sup>138</sup> See *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 521–2 (12 Dec. 1944).

<sup>139</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 83.

<sup>140</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 296 (24 Aug. 1944).

from the Bendlerblock.<sup>141</sup> Roland von Hößlin's father, Maj.-Gen. Hubert von Hößlin, tried (in vain) to found a case in defence of his son on the plea that 'the accused could not foresee that the coup d'état would take the form of the events of 20 July. This change of plan was not necessarily directed against the Führer at all, it might for example have been intended to alter the structure of the Führer's entourage.'<sup>142</sup> Maj. Hans-Jürgen Graf von Blumenthal, who was to have been the liaison officer with military district II (Stettin), apparently gave the Gestapo several different versions of his allotted task, but all of them sounded more or less within the law. Whether Stauffenberg had asked him to do anything else must remain an open question.<sup>143</sup> Lt.-Gen. Fritz Thiele, who was to be responsible for securing the technical communications aspects of the coup, had long been privy to the VALKYRIE plans but did not know of the impending attack on Hitler until shortly before 20 July.<sup>144</sup> After lengthy investigations, the Gestapo came to the surprising but probably correct conclusion that: 'It appears from our interrogation of the Stauffenberg group (notably Schulenburg) and from the documentary material that has been secured (advance orders, decrees, etc.) that many of those who were allocated tasks and many of the liaison officers really had not been informed.'<sup>145</sup>

It is also no surprise that Stauffenberg did not admit his immediate superior, Fromm, to the conspiracy, probably assuming that he would not fail the coup when the decisive moment came.<sup>146</sup> The head of the army general staff operations section, Lt.-Gen. Heusinger, had repeatedly made critical comments about Hitler and his style of leadership, but on being approached by the conspirators he advised against 'changing horses in mid-stream'. He too was seen as someone the conspirators could count on in the last resort—provided the Führer was dead.<sup>147</sup>

Just as the military motives for resistance ranged from alternative concepts based on professional thinking within the parameters of the system to fundamental resistance designed to bring it down, so too the conspirators varied widely in respect of their commitment to the conspiracy and their knowledge of the planned assassination. By no means all the men who were arrested and put to death after 20 July 1944 had made a deliberate and considered commitment

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 43 (24 July 1944).

<sup>142</sup> Maj.-Gen. von Hößlin, 'Denkschrift über das Verhalten meines Sohnes Roland von Hößlin', 5 Oct. 1944, repr. in Kageneck, *Zwischen Eid und Gewissen*, 143–4.

<sup>143</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 333–4 (1 Sept. 1944).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 226 (15 Aug. 1944); see also, to the same effect, Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 472, according to which Stauffenberg did not even inform all the ministers-designate. However, Gisevius' comments on Stauffenberg should be treated with caution.

<sup>145</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 256–7 (18 Aug. 1944). See, to the same effect, SS-Obersturmbannführer Kiesel in his—not altogether reliable—notes: Kiesel, 'SS-Bericht', 14.

<sup>146</sup> Maj.-Gen. (retd.) Kurt Haseloff, statement on the questions raised in the letter of 28 May 1952 from RA Sprotte to Maj.-Gen. (retd.) Kennes, BA-MA MSg 1/2937; statement [by Maj.-Gen. (retd.) Kennes] on Wolfgang Müller, 'Gegen eine neue Dolchstoßlüge', 27 Aug. 1947, BA-MA MSg 1/2938; Mueller, 'Friedrich Fromm', 73.

<sup>147</sup> Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 273–4, 277, 279.

in full knowledge of the facts. By no means all the men who made that commitment had been against the system from the beginning. There was no clear distinction between those who were 'in' and those who were 'out', there was no such thing as 'membership' of the conspiracy, either over time or at any point in time. All the edges are blurred. Despite the general-staff planning skills of Stauffenberg and his closest friends, the work of the state surveillance bodies, the increasing time pressure, and the ambivalent attitude of many officers and generals had prevented more detailed preparations.

At first, it looked as though the general mobilization on the outbreak of war might break all ties between conspirators and permanently inhibit further resistance activities,<sup>148</sup> but new prospects opened up in the course of time. The bonds between civil and military opposition circles were strengthened, especially as a considerable number of civilian conspirators were called up for military service. The opposition acquired a broader base because, as a result of social change, war, and persecution, members of the national-conservative élite came into contact with circles they had never moved in before.<sup>149</sup> A 'counter-élite' sprang up as an alternative to the ideal 'National Socialist men and women' the regime and its Führer had set out to create.<sup>150</sup> The regime was once again surprised and shocked, despite its experience with the Schulze-Boysen group in 1942/3, to discover that such a counter-élite had been formed among its own senior officials.<sup>151</sup>

#### 4. ALTERNATIVES TO ASSASSINATION

Immediately after the death of Reich President Hindenburg, the armed forces swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler. This was certainly not primarily 'in the nature of a coup by Hitler, a surprise attack on the Reichswehr'.<sup>152</sup> On the contrary, the oath was a voluntary act by the leaders of the Reichswehr binding them to the dictator,<sup>153</sup> and it represented a problem for any move against Hitler.

As to whether they were still bound by the oath, the conspirators had privately concluded that Hitler, to whom they had sworn the oath, had spectacularly failed to fulfil his obligation of loyalty to the German people in general and the armed forces in particular. He had forfeited any claim to 'allegiance' by his criminal and amateur conduct of the war, and the oath was therefore void—according to the small band of determined opponents among the military.<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, tradition and religion still had a very strong hold, and when the decisive moment came many other members of the forces, at all levels, were likely to feel bound by their oath and to reject the idea of a coup if

<sup>148</sup> See, to this effect, Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 60.

<sup>149</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 41.

<sup>150</sup> Mommsen, 'Bürgerlicher Widerstand', 56.

<sup>152</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> Foertsch, *Schuld und Verhängnis*, 64–5; Volkmann, 'Von Blomberg zu Keitel', 59–60; see also, more recently, Lange, 'Der Fahnenheid', 112–35.

<sup>154</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 46; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 189.

<sup>151</sup> Danyel, 'Rote Kapelle', 14.

Hitler was still alive. From a very early stage, the idea of a coup was therefore linked with the idea of assassination. Nevertheless, in the autumn of 1938, only a very small circle, a 'conspiracy within the conspiracy', had reached the radical conclusion that Hitler would have to be killed rather than deposed. Beck, for example, considered the possibility of taking the Führer into custody, Halder wanted the army to keep a low profile, but Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz's shock troops assumed from the very beginning that Hitler would not survive 'arrest'.<sup>155</sup>

Both civil and military conspirators had considerable reservations about 'tyrannicide'. Maj. Freiherr von Leonrod, a fellow-member of Stauffenberg's 17th Cavalry Regiment and a devout Catholic, is known to have sought the advice of his father confessor, a Jesuit priest—advice that cost the priest his life.<sup>156</sup> Goerdeler had declared that the aim of the German opposition was to restore 'the full majesty of the law'<sup>157</sup>—so it was hardly fitting to start with murder. In the end, Goerdeler rejected tyrannicide on fundamentally religious grounds. He thus became the chief proponent of the idea that 'none of the many unpredictable aspects of any large-scale political process can ever be deemed as dangerous as abandoning the rule of law'.<sup>158</sup> Beck too constantly wondered 'whether the laws of God and man ordained and required that tyranny be not merely resisted but removed'.<sup>159</sup> Ernst Jünger spoke openly, after the war, of the 'scepticism, suspicion, and repulsion'<sup>160</sup> he had felt at the thought of an assassination.

Of the conspirators who were prepared to accept the idea of assassination, despite their misgivings, by no means all were prepared to do the deed themselves. The head of the organization section of the army general staff, Maj.-Gen. Stieff, was unwilling to take on the task, not because he was a coward but because he had moral scruples about doing so. He did not wish to 'sully his soul', a surprising moral position for a man who regarded Hitler as 'the incarnation of evil' and 'the Antichrist'. Stauffenberg repeatedly pressed Stieff to 'light the fuse', but to no avail.<sup>161</sup>

The whole of the loose-knit group surrounding Goerdeler was united in its refusal to countenance assassination. Rommel, approached by Strölin at Goerdeler's request, took the same position. Rommel is supposed to have suggested that 'Hitler should be secured by reliable armoured units and arraigned

<sup>155</sup> Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 436; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 122–5; Meinl, *Nationalsozialisten gegen Hitler*, 283–97, 292.

<sup>156</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 289–90 (23 Aug. 1944).

<sup>157</sup> Beck and Goerdeler, *Gemeinschaftsdokumente*, 233.

<sup>158</sup> The unreliable information in Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 341, is supported by Schramm, *Aufstand*, 17.

<sup>159</sup> Gotthard von Falkenhausen, Report on events in Paris on 20 July, IfZ, ED 88/2, coll. Zeller, Bl. 44.

<sup>160</sup> Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 236.  
<sup>161</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 347–8 (where the quotation occurs), 351. Goerdeler took a similar position: 'I am absolutely against killing, even as a means to a political end. If others want to do it, they must bear the responsibility,' *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 101 (30 July 1944).

before a German court'.<sup>162</sup> This idea, complete nonsense from a military point of view—and much more likely to have originated in the Goerdeler circle—must have been attributed to Rommel after the event. Equally absurd was the proposal passed to the US intelligence service in Switzerland that Hitler should not be killed but taken prisoner—with the aid of a 'strategic airborne landing'.<sup>163</sup> According to Gisevius,<sup>164</sup> a somewhat unreliable witness even then, the plan was 'drawn up by the military group in the conspiracy' but that is hard to believe, as it is clearly impractical in military terms.<sup>165</sup> Goerdeler was apparently still advocating, in May 1944, a solution that did not involve assassination. This raises doubts about his grasp of the military and political realities in Germany.<sup>166</sup>

According to a scenario produced by Goerdeler in prison, there should have been an armistice on the western front, and 'the German army in the west should have pulled out and moved across Germany to the eastern front to defend the country against the Russians'. 'The ill-fated assassination would have been avoided, the people would have been informed, and success would have been secured by plain speaking and fair dealing.'<sup>167</sup> Doubts have rightly been raised about the value of this document, written in prison, but the fact remains that even at that late stage Goerdeler undoubtedly still thought that the people could be won over by a clear explanation, and still believed in military action against Hitler while he was alive. Others, elsewhere, were thinking on much more realistic lines. Members of the staff of Army Group Centre had also initially considered the possibility of simply taking Hitler into custody, but by the spring of 1943 they were already convinced that it would be too risky.<sup>168</sup>

Another possible way of avoiding assassination was to engineer a 'technical news blackout', cut all lines of communication between Führer headquarters and the outside world for 24 hours, and use that time to create an irreversible situation by issuing orders to retreat on all fronts. Given the cooperation of the officers in charge of communications, Gen. Erich Fellgibel and his deputy, Lt.-Gen. Thiele, such a scenario appeared to be feasible. In fact, the

<sup>162</sup> Hanno Kremer, 20 July in Paris. RIAS Berlin broadcast, 19 and 22 July 1979, 12, IfZ, Ms. 200/85; see also, to the same effect, statement by Speidel in that broadcast, 11–12.

<sup>163</sup> 'Das Attentat vom 20. Juli und seine Vorgeschichte: Bericht und Operationsvorschläge von OSS Director William J. Donovan an Präsident Roosevelt, 22 July 1944', reproduced in *USA und deutscher Widerstand*, No. 25, 91–6, where the date is given as the beginning of May; Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 386–7; see similar but earlier plan in Heideking, 'Die "Breakers"-Akte', 18; *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3–123 (telegram 3423–31, 13 May 1944), 288–9.

<sup>164</sup> Dulles, *Germany's Underground*, 129; *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3–123 (telegram 3423–31), 288–9.

<sup>165</sup> See, to the same effect, Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 388. Ritter concludes that 'these may well have been the first thoughts of a small circle who were not really privy to the thinking of the leading protagonists'. However, the similarities are too striking, and it is quite possible that the imaginative Gisevius passed an 'extended' version of the original plan on to Dulles.

<sup>166</sup> See also Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 189; Heinemann, 'Illusionen', 1067.

<sup>167</sup> Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 400.

<sup>168</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 89 (28 July 1944), 224–5 (15 Aug. 1944).



conspirators devoted a certain amount of energy during the preparations for the VALKYRIE operation to plans for gaining rapid control of military communication lines in order to secure the system of military discipline that was fundamental to the success of the proposed coup.<sup>169</sup>

In the spring of 1943, Fellgiebel looked into the possibility of isolating Hitler, and concluded that a task of that order of magnitude would require extensive advance planning that could not be kept secret.<sup>170</sup> In other words, it was more or less impossible. The conspirators accordingly abandoned the idea and henceforth devoted all their energies to planning for the situation that would follow an assassination. Here too, the death of the Führer was an essential prerequisite. So long as Hitler was alive, he probably could not be prevented from using the lines of communication for very long;<sup>171</sup> at the beginning of July 1944, Fellgiebel again explained to the small inner circle his views on control of these.<sup>172</sup> In the course of further talks on the eve of the aborted coup on 15 July, it again emerged that it would be impossible to cut the Führer headquarters off completely, even if the assassination attempt was successful.<sup>173</sup> Gen. Thiele had twenty officers ready to secure the communications installations on 15 July as planned—but the arrangement could not easily be made again at short notice, so on 20 July communications were not yet fully under control, even in Berlin.<sup>174</sup> The course of events on 20 July confirmed the view that it was impossible to ‘cut off’ the Führer headquarters, at least while Hitler was alive. Communications were briefly cut by the ‘legitimate’ regime and subsequently resumed, as Fellgiebel and, even more, Thiele hoped to conceal their role in the conspiracy and did not take all the measures that had been planned.<sup>175</sup>

So every alternative to assassination as the ‘initial spark’ to ignite a coup d’état proved to be a snare and a delusion and it was gradually realized that Hitler would have to be removed by force.<sup>176</sup> A milestone was Stauffenberg’s decision to join the conspiracy, since he had privately concluded even before he was posted to Africa that: ‘The point is not to tell him the truth but to put an end to him.’<sup>177</sup> This uncompromising stand was most probably justified: ‘The aura

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 98–9 (30 July 1944); on the role of naval communications: report by Dr Sydney Jessen, 1946, 2, IFZ, ZS A–29–II, 32; see also detailed account in Hoffmann, *History of German Resistance*, *passim*.

<sup>170</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 329 (31 Aug. 1944).  
<sup>171</sup> Ibid. 376 (11 Sept. 1944). The Waffen-SS had in the meantime established its own communications system within the country because ‘it would be possible with these communications units to control the whole of the Reich communications system in the event of disturbances of any kind’, *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 995.

<sup>172</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 91 (28 July 1944); Mühleisen, ‘Hellmuth Stieff’, 357; IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881–PS, 317–19.

<sup>173</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 329 (31 Aug. 1944).

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 226 (15 Aug. 1944), 377 (11 Sept. 1944).

<sup>175</sup> Mühleisen, ‘Hellmuth Stieff’, 363; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 246; report by Dr Hellmut Arntz, adjutant to Fellgiebel, IFZ, ED 88/2, coll. Zeller, fo. 4; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 330 (31 Aug. 1944).

<sup>176</sup> Ulrich von Hassell, for example, supported the assassination heart and soul, Hiller von Gaertringen, ‘Cäsar von Hofacker’, 80.

<sup>177</sup> See, for example, Kramarz, *Stauffenberg*, 106; see also his statements to Kuhn when he visited him in hospital, in Chavkin and Kalganov, ‘Neue Quellen’, 379 (statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944).



surrounding Hitler's name was so powerful that the troops found it irresistible. Any attempt by a general—whether in Germany or on the western front—to proclaim an opposition government and march on the centre of Hitler's regime would have foundered sooner or later on the troops' refusal to obey orders.<sup>178</sup> Any attempt to organize an uprising while Hitler was alive was doomed—it was generally agreed at the conspirators' last important meeting in the Stauffenberg brothers' house on the Tristanstraße, near the Wannsee railway station,<sup>179</sup> that only the 'central solution', namely a coup following an assassination, had any prospect of success. 'Stauffenberg, unlike Goerdeler, set all his hopes on the period after the assassination. Until then, any steps that did not lead straight to Hitler's "situation room"—armed with an explosive charge—were pointless.'<sup>180</sup>

However, assassination was morally justifiable only if it was directly connected with an attempted coup. The conspirators agreed that an attack without a coup would have been mere murder. Hardenberg noted later that 'it would certainly not have sufficed to kill Hitler if the military plans to take control of the state had not been sufficiently advanced. Otherwise, Himmler and Goebbels would have stepped in and carried on the criminal enterprise.'<sup>181</sup>

## 5. THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS

No examination of the resistance would be complete without a brief account of the various attempts to remove the dictator. There is no need to include the more improbable rumours, such as the story of an alleged attempt during a full-dress parade to mark the interment of the unfortunate Gen. Eduard Dietl, when bombs concealed in three knapsacks are supposed to have been discovered just in time.<sup>182</sup> One attempt that was important for the future course of events was the attack in the Munich beer hall on 8 November 1939 by Georg Elser, acting on his own initiative. As a result of this attack, the security surrounding Hitler was tightened up and remained so for the rest of the war.<sup>183</sup> Thus, for example, an assassination attempt by the military conspirators, which had been scheduled for November 1939, was called off because it was impossible to obtain the necessary explosives under the stricter conditions that now obtained.<sup>184</sup> All the early plans for a coup suffered from the fact that

<sup>178</sup> Gotthard von Falkenhausen, Report on events in Paris on 20 July, IfZ, ED 88/2, coll. Zeller, fo. 45; research has produced similar results, see Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 481–2; Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 7.

<sup>179</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 101 (30 July 1944).

<sup>180</sup> Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 453.

<sup>181</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 453.

<sup>182</sup> Andreas Förster, 'Bombe im Tornister: Ein Zufallsfund in einer Stasi-Akte führt zu einem Historikerstreit. Hat es im Juni 1944 einen Attentatsversuch auf Hitler am Obersalzberg gegeben oder nicht?', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 11 Apr. 2002, 3; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 90 (28 July 1944). Such an incident can hardly have failed to attract attention in 'high places' and, if the rumour was true, it seems scarcely credible that an assassin could have actually detonated a bomb in Hitler's immediate vicinity only a few days later.

<sup>183</sup> Ortner, *Der einsame Attentäter*; Hoffmann, *Hitler's Personal Security*, 111–18.

<sup>184</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 176–7.

action by the opposition was predicated on a specific situation such as the outbreak of war, or the seemingly pointless attack in the west, which constantly failed to materialize. Waiting for the right moment called for a degree of flexibility that could not be kept up for any length of time.<sup>185</sup>

The first serious plans for an assassination were formed in the winter months of 1942/3 in the circle of conspirators on the staff of Army Group Centre.<sup>186</sup> Several of the staff officers there were prepared to lay down their lives for the cause. However, the preparations for the coup had to be made in Berlin first, so a serious attempt was not made until March 1943.<sup>187</sup> Canaris obtained the necessary explosives from Abwehr stores and took them to a meeting in Smolensk. They were then placed, with a timer, on Hitler's plane but the British-designed timer did not work properly, probably because of the cold at high altitude. The firing-pin struck the percussion cap but it failed to ignite. Both the package itself (disguised as a Cointreau bottle) and the complicated process of trying to get rid of the explosive afterwards could easily have led to discovery, but good contacts in the Abwehr helped to muddy the trail.<sup>188</sup> Further attempts were mounted by the circle in Army Group Centre, but for one reason or another they all came to nothing.

It was planned to make another attempt in the autumn of 1943 during a situation conference, and Stauffenberg had already set a date in October. But Stieff, who was supposed to make the attempt, could not bring himself to do it.<sup>189</sup> Yet another attempt, to be made by Capt. Axel von dem Bussche during a presentation of new uniforms, failed because the event was cancelled at short notice.<sup>190</sup>

The group attached to Stauffenberg had great difficulty in getting hold of explosives as it could no longer rely on the resources of the Abwehr, which had been broken up in the spring of 1943. Under wartime conditions, even a lieutenant-colonel on the general staff could not put in an order for explosives and detonators without attracting attention. So it was necessary, once again, to call on private connections. In December 1943, a friend of Maj. Kuhn, a Maj. Gerhard Knaak who was in charge of a battalion of engineers on the eastern front, handed the necessary explosive material over without further question to an officer who had been sent to collect it.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 163.

<sup>186</sup> Ideas of killing Hitler when he visited the western front came to nothing because he did not go there. See Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 437; Schramm, *Aufstand*, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 224.

<sup>188</sup> Schlabrendorff, *Secret War*, 226–40; Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 353 n. 81; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 128 (3 Aug. 1944); Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 394–5; IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881–PS, 331–2; Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 332.

<sup>189</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 385; Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 272; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 89–90 (28 July 1944); Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 351.

<sup>190</sup> Dönhoff, 'Axel von dem Bussche', 33–4; Engert, 'Er wollte Hitler töten'; Meyer, 'Auswirkungen', 301.

<sup>191</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 95–6 (29 July 1944), 318–19 (30 Aug. 1944).

The time pressure had increased since the spring of 1944. With the demise of the group of conspirators in the Abwehr a year earlier, members of opposition groups who were still at large lived in constant fear of arrest. The next arrest, that of Hartmut Plaas, a senior civil servant in the research office of the Reich ministry of aviation, Göring's telephone-tapping centre in Berlin-Zehlendorf, was certainly sensational. Plaas had warned an acquaintance, Maj. Otto Kiep, that his telephone was bugged.<sup>192</sup> In March 1944, Capt. Ludwig Gehre of the Abwehr had to go to ground because the Gestapo was looking for him. Stauffenberg had already warned his fellow-conspirators not to contact Gehre because he was under surveillance. Gehre was most upset and threatened to tell the Gestapo all about the conspiracy if he was arrested—partly, no doubt, in order to put pressure on Stauffenberg to get on with the plans for a coup.<sup>193</sup> Another arrest marginally connected with the conspiracy was that of Col. Wilhelm Staehle, and in that case no one seemed to know exactly how much he knew and whether he would talk. Staehle was a member of the large circle attached to Goerdeler. Judge Advocate-General Sack, who had worked with Staehle, visited him in prison in an attempt to clarify the position, but this naturally brought Sack himself to the Gestapo's attention.<sup>194</sup>

But then the Gestapo began to get closer to the heart of the conspiracy. The Social Democrat Julius Leber, the man of whom Stauffenberg had high political hopes and who was set to play a central role in the government to be established after the coup, was arrested on 5 July 1944.<sup>195</sup> Stauffenberg had been in regular contact with Leber, and the whole coup might be compromised if the interrogators succeeded in getting him to talk. Developments at the front added to the pressure. The western Allies had landed in Normandy on 6 June and secured a foothold there. And—a development Stauffenberg, as a general staff officer, had clearly foreseen—the great Soviet offensive that was to lead to the collapse of Army Group Centre in August had been launched on 22 June. The thunder of guns at the front could already be heard in Insterburg, where another member of the conspiracy, Cavalry Capt. Roland von Hößlin, was based.<sup>196</sup>

By now, Hitler's paranoia had increased to such an extent that he hardly ever left his current headquarters. So the only question for the aspiring assassins was which of them would be invited to attend the Führer's situation conferences. 'At the beginning of April, Stauffenberg was still convinced that the coup could be started by one of the younger officers who, like von dem Bussche, von Kleist, and von Breitenbuch, were prepared to lay down their lives in order to assassinate Hitler. However, the trouble was that none of them could get anywhere near him.'<sup>197</sup> Wagner and Stieff saw Hitler regularly, but neither of them was

<sup>192</sup> Gellermann, . . . und lauschten für Hitler, 101–3.

<sup>193</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 225 (15 Aug. 1944); John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 41.

<sup>194</sup> Haase, 'Generalstabsrichter Karl Sack', 206–7; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 363 (7 Sept. 1944).

<sup>195</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 447; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 187.

<sup>196</sup> Kageneck, *Zwischen Eid und Gewissen*, 119 (letter from Hößlin to his parents, 12 July 1944).

<sup>197</sup> John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 43.

prepared to do the deed.<sup>198</sup> That left only Stauffenberg himself. He had been appointed colonel and chief-of-staff to the commander of the replacement army on 1 July 1944 and, since Fromm was *persona non grata*, his chief-of-staff was sure to have access to Hitler at the periodic situation conferences.

However, that posed a number of problems for the success of the proposed coup d'état. The assassination was not supposed to be an end in itself, but merely the 'initial spark' to ignite the coup. Yet Stauffenberg's presence in the Bendlerblock in Berlin was absolutely essential for VALKYRIE to proceed according to plan, so there could be no question of the assassin blowing himself up with Hitler as originally intended. On the contrary, Stauffenberg had to survive the explosion, get away in time—despite the risks that entailed for the success of the enterprise—and make his way at once to Berlin. Even if he used a courier aircraft provided by Stieff, the journey would take several hours and during that time the man responsible for organizing the coup d'état would be unreachable, either in the air or on the way from the airfield to the centre of Berlin.

On 6 July 1944, Stauffenberg attended his first meeting with the Führer at the Berghof in Berchtesgaden in his new capacity as chief-of-staff to the commander of the replacement army. It is not clear whether he intended to make use of this first opportunity to attempt the assassination.<sup>199</sup> At all events, Stauffenberg took the explosives with him to Berchtesgaden, but may have done so in the hope that he might even now persuade Stieff to carry out the attack. Stauffenberg visited the Führer again on 11 July 1944 and again he had the bomb with him. But he decided not to act on that occasion because neither Göring nor Himmler was present, and the opposition was afraid that one of them, or even Goebbels, might step in after Hitler's death as head of a 'new' National Socialist regime and quell the revolt. This applied particularly to Himmler who, as Reichsführer SS, controlled the regime's strongest military force within the Reich.<sup>200</sup>

The second assassination attempt was set for 15 July 1944. Stauffenberg was obviously determined to go ahead this time, even if Himmler or Göring or both were not there. However, after a meeting in Führer headquarters he received an urgent message from Beck, Wagner, Stieff, and others, insisting that he should not make the attempt if the two Nazi bigwigs did not turn up.<sup>201</sup> According to some reports, Stieff even went so far as to steal the briefcase containing the explosive from Stauffenberg. However, there is also reason to believe that Stauffenberg wanted to act but was prevented from doing so by

<sup>198</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 380; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 89 (28 July 1944).

<sup>199</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 451; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 253. The statement in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 130 (3 Aug. 1944) is not conclusive.

<sup>200</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung* i, 43 (24 July 1944); Meyer, *Adolf Heusinger*, 272; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 453–4. Whether (as Hoffmann assumes) Stauffenberg allowed himself to be guided by the demands of Field Marshals Rommel and Kluge must remain an open question. For more details of their role in the conspiracy, see below.

<sup>201</sup> In this connection, we agree with the reasons advanced in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 259–61, correcting an earlier interpretation (Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 454–6; see also *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i, 330 (31 Aug. 1944); Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 359–60.

the conditions obtaining in the 'Wolf's Lair'.<sup>202</sup> The results of the decision to postpone the attempt yet again were much more serious. On 11 July very few preparations had been made in Berlin for the coup d'état, but on 15 July the General Army Office sent out a VALKYRIE early-warning signal in the morning, fortunately without the additional and treasonable secret orders.

For the first time, the conspirators had disclosed the plans for the coup to more officers, including the military governor of Berlin, Lt.-Gen. von Hase.<sup>203</sup> Some of the preparatory measures required to engineer a 'technical news blackout' at Führer headquarters had already been taken. When the news came through that once again the assassination had not taken place, Olbricht had to make all speed to inform the troop units which had been placed on alert in Potsdam, Krampnitz, and Glienicke that the whole thing was just an exercise and if possible to hush it up. Addressing the assembled officers, Olbricht spoke of the danger of a landing by sea, the possibility that troops might have to be posted at short notice to the eastern front, and the risk of internal unrest 'which was certainly within the realms of possibility, particularly in Berlin, where there were so many foreigners'.<sup>204</sup> Cavalry Capt. von Hößlin, who had ordered his Insterburg 'armoured reconnaissance training battalion for officer cadets' to set out for Königsberg according to plan, had to turn back and explain that it was all a mock-alert exercise.<sup>205</sup>

Increasingly, the situation called for action. 'Exercises' of this kind could not be repeated *ad infinitum* without arousing suspicion. Olbricht had been able to order a 'mock alert' on 15 July only because the commander of the replacement army, Fromm, had flown off to East Prussia and was consequently not in Berlin at the time. Fromm was unlikely to agree to another mock alert. So, next time, the full range of VALKYRIE measures could be set in motion only if it was quite clear that the assassination had actually taken place. The one and only chance of issuing an early warning had been wasted.<sup>206</sup> Time was going by. Stauffenberg's liaison officer, Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker, brought disturbing news from France: Kluge and Rommel both expected a collapse on the western front very soon. This would make it more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve one of the important aims of the coup, namely an acceptable end to the war in the west.<sup>207</sup>

Just then, on 17 July, the conspirators got wind of a rumour which very soon proved to be false but which put them under even greater pressure to act. Stauffenberg learned in a roundabout way that people in Berlin were saying that the Führer headquarters was going to be blown up in the next few days. Not suspecting that this was feedback from his own inner circle, the leader of the conspiracy inevitably feared that the whole complex plan for the coup was

<sup>202</sup> See Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 454.

<sup>203</sup> See above; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 213; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 377 (11 Sept. 1944); IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 482-4.

<sup>204</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 158 (6 Aug. 1944); Schober, 'Eine Chance', 52.

<sup>205</sup> Kageneck, *Zwischen Eid und Gewissen*, 119-20; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 45 (24 July 1944).

<sup>206</sup> IfZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, fo. 3.

<sup>207</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 360 (6 Sept. 1944); Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 86-7.

about to go up in smoke.<sup>208</sup> Meanwhile, Nebe learned something that day, over lunch in the Reich security main office, that was no rumour: the Gestapo was about to arrest Goerdeler.<sup>209</sup> Even Beck had not had any contact with Goerdeler for several days because he was obviously under surveillance and the whole conspiracy was consequently at risk.<sup>210</sup>

The threat of discovery was growing. Stauffenberg therefore decided to carry out the attack when he next reported to Hitler, on 20 July, whether or not other Nazi bigwigs were present.<sup>211</sup> On the afternoon of 18 July, Stauffenberg again started to make the necessary preparations, calling on only a very select band of fellow-conspirators for assistance. Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg was one of the first to be alerted. He immediately returned early from his home to Berlin.<sup>212</sup> Others, including Hardenberg, Hase, Lehndorff, Erdmann, and Hassel, were ordered to take up position in their respective action stations.<sup>213</sup> The conspirators in Stülpnagel's and Hofacker's group in Paris also met on the evening of 19 July for a final briefing.<sup>214</sup> Hase had inspected his Guards Battalion again on 18 July, although they had fulfilled all expectations by getting to the government quarter in 27 minutes during the 'exercise' on 15 July.<sup>215</sup> Everything was ready.

The tale of the dramatic events that took place on 20 July in Berlin, Rastenburg, Paris, and elsewhere has already been told at some length in the literature on the subject.<sup>216</sup> The following account focuses on the way in which the various elements of the plans for the assassination and above all for the coup d'état, considered earlier, worked out in practice when the decisive day came. Stauffenberg and his adjutant, Werner von Haeften, flew to Rastenburg with Stieff, firmly resolved to carry out the attack this time 'at all costs', as Tresckow put it.<sup>217</sup> It has been suggested that Stieff managed to persuade Stauffenberg during the flight to abandon the project after all, and that Stauffenberg merely carried out a 'token' attack,<sup>218</sup> but these suggestions take no account of the fact that the matter had been discussed repeatedly and at length in the military resistance and that Stauffenberg absolutely insisted on the link between the assassination and the coup.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Report by Dr Sydney Jessen, 1946, IfZ, ZS A-29-II, 32, fos. 4-5, 8.

<sup>209</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 773 (State secretary in the Reich ministry of justice to Bormann with copy of the judgment passed on Nebe, 1 L 54/45 g.Rs. 2 Mar. 1945); Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 459-60.

<sup>210</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 362 (7 Sept. 1944).  
<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* 43 (24 July 1944); Report by Dr Sydney Jessen, The navy's part in the assassination, 1946, 4-5, IfZ, ZS A-29-II, 32; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 461.

<sup>212</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 91 (28 July 1944).

<sup>213</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 434; IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 485; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 92 (28 July 1944), 258 (18 Aug. 1944), 377 (11 Sept. 1944), 330 (31 Aug. 1944).

<sup>214</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 80.

<sup>215</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 215-16.

<sup>216</sup> The accounts in Hoffmann, *History of German Resistance*, and Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, are probably unsurpassed as true and vivid depictions of the facts.

<sup>217</sup> Schlabrendorff, *Secret War*, 277; Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 362; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 84 (26 July 1944).

<sup>218</sup> Schmidt-Hackenberg, 20. *Juli* 1944.

<sup>219</sup> Schmidt-Hackenberg, 20. *Juli* 1944, overlooks the role of Haeften, who was on the same flight; nor does he consider the enormous energy with which Stauffenberg continued to conduct the coup on the afternoon and evening of 20 July—to the bitter end, without any indication that he did not really want to bring it off. There is also little reason to accept the implicit assumption that Stauffenberg cold-bloodedly sacrificed the lives of his many fellow-conspirators for a cause he had himself undermined.



Stauffenberg had to prime the bomb just before the meeting started. He was severely disabled as a result of his war wounds, and therefore used specially adapted pliers to crush the acid ampoule of the fuse. He then had to carry the briefcase containing the explosive charge into the meeting room, put it down, and leave the room as soon as possible so as to avoid being caught up in the explosion.<sup>220</sup> The situation conference was brought forward at short notice because Hitler was expecting a visit from Mussolini in the afternoon. Also, Stauffenberg and Haefen were disturbed while they were priming the fuse, with the result that Stauffenberg packed only one of the two explosive charges. The house where the meeting was held was certainly not a 'hut' but a solid building, albeit with a wooden floor which failed to contain the blast. The effect of the single charge that was ignited was not sufficient—as we now know—to kill everyone in the room. If Stauffenberg had left the second charge in his briefcase—even without a fuse—it would certainly have exploded when the first charge went off, and in that case it is very likely that no one who was at the meeting would have survived.<sup>221</sup> So, is the failure of the assassination attempt to be attributed to an 'error in executing the plan', a 'mistake' made by Stauffenberg as a result of undue haste, or the fact that he was interrupted by a staff sergeant?<sup>222</sup> This interpretation does not do full justice to the facts. In view of the increasingly acute time pressure and the refusal of all the other conspirators who had access to Hitler (notably Stieff), there was no alternative but to allow the attack to be carried out by the seriously disabled Stauffenberg. The weak point in the attempted assassination was not that Stauffenberg did the wrong thing when the decisive moment came, but that he personally had to carry out the attack at all.

Stauffenberg managed, with considerable skill and despite the measures that were taken immediately to prevent him, to get out of the Führer headquarters and board the aircraft that was waiting to fly him to Berlin, where the assembled opposition leaders were awaiting news of Hitler's death to set the coup d'état in motion.<sup>223</sup> It remains an open question whether Fellgiebel actually used the classic conspirators' words reported by Gisevius: 'Something terrible has happened—the Führer is still alive.'<sup>224</sup> However that may be, one member of the conspiracy, Lt.-Gen. Thiele, knew shortly after 1300h that the attempt had been made. He also knew that Hitler had survived but he kept the information to himself at first. Thiele obviously hoped that by keeping the news of a failed assassination quiet—provided there was no attempt at a coup—he might save his own skin. Apparently no one had considered beforehand what would happen if the attack was made but did not succeed.<sup>225</sup> In particular, it had never been determined whether, in that case, the coup should be launched anyway, whether it should be abandoned in order to muddy the trail, and who

<sup>220</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 363; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 472–6.

<sup>221</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 265.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. 265–6, developing arguments advanced in Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 478.

<sup>223</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 486–7; Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 363.

<sup>224</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 516–17.

<sup>225</sup> Fraenkel and Manvell, *Der 20. Juli*, 225–7 (not in English); Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 268.



should take the necessary decision. Stauffenberg certainly could not take it, because he was flying back at the time and could not be reached.

By 1400h, there were increasing indications in Führer headquarters that Col. Graf Stauffenberg of the replacement army command must have been the assassin.<sup>226</sup> Although, as already explained, Hitler had always distrusted Fromm and Fromm had already sought executive powers for the replacement army, it never seems to have occurred to the military and civil leaders of the Reich that the attempted assassination might be the signal for a long-prepared military putsch. Hitler and his entourage were entirely taken up with Mussolini's visit that was to take place that day (and that was in fact the last time the two dictators met). The criminal police were called to Rastenburg, the attack obviously being regarded as a crime requiring police investigation, certainly not an open bid for control of the Reich. The leaders of the regime assembled in East Prussia took no precautionary measures to secure the capital city of the Reich, and were surprised by the news reports that came through early in the evening about 'executive powers' and VALKYRIE in Berlin and the military districts. Hitler's famous telephone conversation with the commander of the Guards Battalion, Maj. Remer, did not take place until about 1900h,<sup>227</sup> because even Goebbels was taken completely by surprise when Lt. Dr Hans Hagen of the Guards Battalion reported to him at about 1730h with the news that the unit had instructions to occupy the government quarter.

This all gave the conspirators a certain amount of time, which they could have used to push on with the coup. But, as already explained, Thiele had failed to pass on the crucial item of information. Only at about 1600h did Olbricht's new chief-of-staff, Col. Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, issue the prepared VALKYRIE orders on his own initiative and thus irrevocably set the attempted coup d'état in motion.<sup>228</sup> But not all his fellow-conspirators supported the move. Stieff, for example, who was stationed in the army high command's 'Mauerwald' camp not far from the 'Wolf's Lair', 'already regarded the attempted revolt as a lost cause early in the afternoon. He destroyed records and tried to warn fellow-conspirators and prevent further action, which to his mind was pointless.'<sup>229</sup> Stieff was arrested on the night of 21 July but before that Heusinger, who had been wounded, installed him as his representative on the board of the operations section of the army general staff, and Keitel repeatedly urged him to pass the news of Hitler's survival on to the army groups.

## 6. THE OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR THE COUP D'ÉTAT

What military plans had the conspirators prepared that would enable them to seize power within Reich territory after the assassination without provoking a civil war? VALKYRIE had originally been designed as a military emergency

<sup>226</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 363; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 483-4.

<sup>227</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 576-7.

<sup>228</sup> IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 400-1; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 491, 571.

<sup>229</sup> Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 363, particularly 363-6.

measure, but since the autumn of 1943 it had secretly been transformed into Operation VALKYRIE, a full-scale military operation planned on general staff lines. The course of the attempted revolt on 20 July gives only a rough indication of the plans for the operation. It suffered from too many handicaps, including the false alarm on 15 July, the enormous time pressure, and above all, of course, Hitler's survival.

The first VALKYRIE alert on 15 July could at a pinch be passed off—at least to the men in the ranks—as an exercise. From the conspirators' point of view, the prearranged course of events on 20 July was therefore inhibited from the outset by the fact that VALKYRIE was supposed to be launched only when it was clear that the attack had taken place. Or should confirmation of the Führer's death be the criterion? The distinction was an important one, but the conspirators had not reckoned with the possibility that the assassination attempt might fail, in which case there would be no going back but the fundamental basis for VALKYRIE would not have been established.

The central consideration was to secure the capital of the Reich: this was the essential prerequisite for a successful coup in the other military districts. Military district III was originally to have had overall responsibility for the conduct of the military putsch in Berlin, and the district chief-of-staff, Rost, was a fully-fledged member of the conspiracy. The district commander, Lt.-Gen. Kortzfleisch, was reputed to be a Nazi but he could probably be secured and Rost could issue the necessary orders in his name—rather like Stauffenberg and Fromm. But with Rost's departure, a vital command centre was essentially out of action. The Bendlerblock dispatched a liaison officer, Maj. von Oertzen of the general staff, to the district but that did not fully compensate for the loss of Rost.<sup>230</sup> This probably explains why the military governor of Berlin, Lt.-Gen. von Hase, was suddenly given a more important role. But apart from the guards battalion the units under his command were relatively small, the army artificers and army armourers training establishments being the most readily available. The Guards Battalion was to occupy the government quarter in the centre of Berlin and secure the local military headquarters building at No. 1 Unter den Linden.

It was therefore a matter of bringing in forces subordinate to the military district from the outlying Berlin suburbs when the time came. The best placed for the purpose were the training establishments stationed west and south-west of Berlin, especially as they were largely motorized. The men attending courses in the infantry training school in the former Olympic village at Döberitz were housed at Staaken, about eight kilometres west of the Berlin city boundary on the northern side of the big parade ground at Döberitz. The Instruction Regiment, stationed north of the road into Berlin, was fully motorized and consequently best placed to advance on Berlin along the main approach road from the west. The Instruction Regiment was to take over the Tegel transmitter

<sup>230</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 248–9.

in north-west Berlin and occupy the radio studios on the Masurenallee, not far from the main east-west road, and also move into an assembly area in the Tiergarten park—providing military protection for the conspirators' headquarters in the Bendlerblock, situated close by to the south.<sup>231</sup>

The armoured troops from the panzer training school at Krampnitz, further south between Spandau and Potsdam, would arrive later as they had further to come. They were to help the limited forces of the Guards Battalion to cordon off the government quarter and defend the centre of the coup against the expected attack from the south by SS units stationed at Lankwitz and Lichterfelde. Arrangements had been made for the necessary combat reconnaissance in a southerly direction.<sup>232</sup> For administrative purposes, the panzer training school was within the ambit of the General Army Office and thus within Olbricht's remit, but for tactical purposes it 'belonged' to Gen. Heinz Guderian, in his capacity as inspector of armoured troops. So the conspirators would not necessarily be able to call on troop units from the school, even under VALKYRIE conditions. However Olbricht's chief-of-staff, Col. Mertz von Quirnheim, had had this in mind: the troops in training were to be sent to the eastern front but he had persuaded Guderian's staff to delay their departure for a few days so that they could be used for another VALKYRIE exercise.<sup>233</sup>

The Replacement Brigade of the 'Großdeutschland' Armoured Division was stationed at Cottbus, much further away to the south-east of Berlin—and would consequently not be available until much later. The military district liaison officer, Maj. von Oertzen, inspected the brigade on 17 July, primarily in order to ascertain how quickly they would be able to reach the area they were to occupy after the alert.<sup>234</sup> On the morning of 19 July, Stauffenberg went through the details of their mission once again with their deputy commander, Lt.-Col. Hans-Werner Stirijs. Stirijs rated the fighting power of his 7,000 to 8,000-strong force as generally high, and pointed out that many of the men were volunteers—not necessarily an advantage from the conspirators' point of view as it might mean that they were exceptionally loyal to the Führer. The main force of the brigade was to advance on Berlin from the south, threatening the SS units in Lichterfelde and Lankwitz from the rear in the event of an attack on the Bendlerblock.<sup>235</sup> During the 'mock alert', this force had not reached the target area until early in the morning of 16 July—well over twelve hours after the alert was sounded. The secondary tasks of securing the radio transmitters in south Brandenburg and Königs Wusterhausen were completed with greater alacrity.<sup>236</sup> Smaller, less combat-ready and less mobile forces, such as the training troops stationed in Berlin itself, were to secure less important objectives

<sup>231</sup> Schober, 'Eine Chance', 54–7.

<sup>232</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 512–14.

<sup>233</sup> In this connection, Dirks and Janßen, 'Krieg der Generale', 170–2, provides a little information and some very general arguments, while Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 263, gives detailed and basic information.

<sup>234</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 158 (6 Aug. 1944).

<sup>235</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 457, 463. 'Geschichte des Panzerkorps Großdeutschland' gives no indication as to the replacement brigade's role on 20 July 1944.

<sup>236</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 510.

like the arsenal and the former royal palace, provide shock troops, or, like units from the army artificers establishment in Berlin-Lichterfelde, remain available as reserves in the event of a Waffen-SS attack.<sup>237</sup>

The essential available forces were thus strategically placed. The key points for the coup were to be secured, and an attack by the principal forces loyal to the system was to be prevented by a combined advance on the city from the west, south-west, and south-east. Time was of the essence, in view of the considerable distances that had to be covered. In some cases, the alert would actually have to be sounded several hours before the assassination attempt. Thus, Tempelhof airport would have to be secured in good time to prevent Stauffenberg (and possibly Fromm) being arrested and charged by the Gestapo on their return, if they landed there on their way back after the assassination.<sup>238</sup> So Olbricht was probably acting according to plan when he ordered the first VALKYRIE measures prematurely on 15 July.

The plan to conduct the revolt under cover of the 'legitimate' VALKYRIE operation meant that orders had to be issued at a number of levels.<sup>239</sup> VALKYRIE was to be launched initially by telephone, and the formations and units involved in the operation would then start taking the prearranged measures. But the General Army Office could not order measures which clearly pointed to a coup d'état in advance. The commanders of the troop units and offices involved were therefore to report to the Bendlerblock to receive detailed instructions. To simplify the procedure, Stauffenberg had sent liaison officers to the two focal points of the VALKYRIE operation in Berlin, general staff Maj. Egbert von Hayessen to the city commandant's headquarters and Maj. Hans-Ulrich von Oertzen to the military district headquarters, to give the necessary instructions on the spot. Hase, in his capacity as city commandant, and the new chief-of-staff of the military district headquarters Maj.-Gen. Otto Herfurth, who was something of an unknown quantity, were thus able to set about their respective tasks at once, without having to report to the commander of the replacement army first.<sup>240</sup> Firm control of the lines of communication was crucial to the success of the enterprise—both to secure the conspirators' conduct of operations and to cut off the forces loyal to the regime. Fellgiebel and his deputy, Thiele, had therefore promised to send communications officers to contact and support the army units or formations operating at the decisive points.

## 7. THE COLLAPSE OF THE ATTEMPTED COUP

In Berlin, the Guards Battalion was alerted first—according to plan—at about 1610h. It turned out under its commander, Remer, and occupied the appointed strongpoints in the government quarter.<sup>241</sup> Remer had received his

<sup>237</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 515–17.

<sup>238</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 249.

<sup>239</sup> Also on this situation, with largely mistaken and sweeping presumptions, Dirks and Janßen, 'Krieg der Generäle', 172–6.

<sup>240</sup> IMT, xxxiii, doc. 3881-PS, 485–6; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 222; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 637 (Remer report); Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 505–6, 514.

<sup>241</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 222; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 637 (Remer report); Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 506–9.

instructions from the military governor, Lt.-Gen. von Hase, and had taken the orders and carried them out without comment. The operative units from the army artificers training establishment in Berlin-Lichterfelde were ready at about 1800h.<sup>242</sup> The principle of military discipline on which the plan was based appeared to be working.

But there was something 'half-hearted' about the conspirators' orders at first, and the measures lacked zest—crippled by the knowledge that Hitler might have survived the attempt on his life.<sup>243</sup> This changed with Stauffenberg's arrival at about 1630h. He had his adjutant put through a call from the airport at Rangsdorf<sup>244</sup> to the Bendlerblock, telling the officers there in no uncertain terms that the Führer was dead. Stauffenberg got to the Bendlerblock about half an hour later and finally took the conduct of the operation in hand. He gave a categorical assurance that the detonation of his explosive device sounded 'as if a 15-centimetre shell had hit the room' and no one could possibly have survived.<sup>245</sup> The machinery of the coup now began to operate at a faster pace. Stauffenberg explained to his commander, Fromm, that he himself had detonated the bomb and called on him to join the conspirators in overthrowing the regime. Fromm, taken by surprise, refused, declared that Stauffenberg, Olbricht, and Mertz von Quirnheim were under arrest, and was promptly taken into custody himself. At the same time, news of an unsuccessful assassination attempt was now beginning to filter through from East Prussia into the Reich. The Führer would be speaking on the radio, it was said.

The rest of the evening was marked by an increasingly vociferous clash between conflicting reports. Through the official channels of the commander of the replacement army the VALKYRIE operation continued to be justified on the ground that Hitler was dead, the victim of a Party conspiracy, while the radio continued to speak of a failed attempt on his life. The contradiction crippled the course of the measures in the military districts, and in Berlin the counter-operation of officers loyal to the regime began to get under way. It now proved to be crucial that Gen. Thiele had been one of the first to learn, at noon, that Hitler had survived. In an attempt to save his own skin, he had chosen not to dispatch the promised communications officers. The troop units from the infantry training establishment had now occupied the radio station on the Masurenallee according to plan, but they lacked the necessary technical expertise to stop transmissions. The transmitters in Tegel and the surrounding area were not closed down either.<sup>246</sup>

<sup>242</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 224.

<sup>243</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 428 (not in English).

<sup>244</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 490–1, suggests good reasons why Stauffenberg probably did not—as the Gestapo discovered—land at Rangsdorf but at Tempelhof or at far-off Gatow. However, in *Stauffenberg*, published in 1992, he assumes (267) without comment that Stauffenberg did in fact land at Rangsdorf. It would have been extremely risky to use the airfield at Gatow, which was not within easy reach of the centre of Berlin and was also very close to several high-level Luftwaffe offices that were loyal to the regime. Tempelhof airport was not to be occupied until 24 hours after the coup got under way (*Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 442 (12 Oct. 1944)). But Rangsdorf was to be secured by units of the 'Großdeutschland' replacement brigade and was very near the OKH in Zossen, so Stauffenberg could most readily obtain armed support from there.

<sup>245</sup> Schlabendorff, *Secret War*, 287.

<sup>246</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 272.

The prime mover in the counter-insurgency in Berlin was not really Remer and his Guards Battalion, although Remer, under the influence of Lt. von Hagen, ignored all orders and got into touch with Goebbels and later, through him, with Hitler himself.<sup>247</sup> On the contrary, it was officers in the General Army Office and in the service of the commander of the replacement army, in other words officers in the Bendlerblock itself, who, acting on the strength of broadcast reports and information to the same effect emanating from the 'Wolf's Lair', put an end to the coup d'état that was taking place on their watch.<sup>248</sup>

The assassination attempt failed because Stauffenberg was the only man available to do the deed, because he was unfit for the task on account of his war wounds, and because he had to come out alive. The coup d'état, in turn, could succeed only if Hitler was dead. And the national-conservative conspirators had also underestimated the importance of factors—such as the increasing ideological indoctrination of the younger members of the active and reserve officer corps, or the regime's systematic use of radio—that were not among the normal run of military considerations. The relatively meagre military forces that were available could be used for the purposes of the coup only so long as the fiction of Hitler's death was maintained. The rapid reaction of the regime very soon turned them round. And the coup did not get far enough in Berlin for it to have any prospect of lasting success in the military districts or in Paris.

Fromm had Stauffenberg and three of his closest fellow-conspirators shot in the night in the courtyard of the Bendlerblock. He gave Beck an opportunity to commit suicide. And a huge wave of arrests followed over the next few days. The resistance may have established a 'counter-elite', but the Nazi regime was absolutely determined to destroy it root and branch if it could, before the regime itself collapsed. Albrecht Haushofer wrote in one of his *Moabit Sonnets*: 'There are times swayed by insanity. | Then it is that those with the best heads are hanged.'<sup>249</sup>

## 8. FUNDAMENTAL FLAWS, AND FAILURE

Why did the resistance against National Socialism fail? The explanation that too few of the members of the resistance were ready to attempt the assassination themselves is subject to serious qualification; indeed any argument that gives undue prominence to human error or the gulf between 'inability to act and decisive action' on the part of those involved in the conspiracy appears questionable<sup>250</sup>—or valid only for the period before the war.<sup>251</sup> Nor do individual 'shortcomings' (Stauffenberg's failure to pack the second charge in his

<sup>247</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 224; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 638 (Remer report).

<sup>248</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 581, 599–601; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 276.

<sup>249</sup> Haushofer, *Moabit Sonnets*, Sonnet XXII: Comrades.

<sup>250</sup> Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 453, 456; Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', 438.

<sup>251</sup> See, for example, Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 133–6.



briefcase, the hesitation of generals such as Olbricht, Hase, Karl Freiherr von Thüngen, and Thiele)<sup>252</sup> adequately explain why the Nazi regime was able to hold out to the end, despite all attempts by the opposition.

The attempt to bring it down was planned as a military coup. Did it fail for lack of adequate military forces in and around the capital?<sup>253</sup> The course of events on 20 July might certainly have been different if more army units and formations had been stationed in the Greater Berlin area, and if they had come out clearly on the side of the conspirators. That they did not do so was attributable not to poor planning or unclear orders<sup>254</sup> but to the fact that, in the summer of 1944, most members of the army stood firmly behind the Führer and did not support his enemies. Many still considered themselves to be bound by their oath of loyalty and, as the forces of 'Bolshevism' approached the borders of the Reich, they had increasing reason to feel that they were fighting for their country. The army was bound to the Führer by the enemy's insistence on unconditional surrender and also, in some cases, by a sense that the army bore some of the responsibility for the crimes committed by the Third Reich; and these bonds were stronger than the conspirators had supposed.<sup>255</sup>

And in this respect—as in many others—the Wehrmacht closely resembled the society that had produced it. Opposition to Hitler found no echo among the general public. Indeed, when they heard what had happened on 20 July, most people repudiated the conspirators' actions—and continued to do so after the war.<sup>256</sup>

By no means the least important reason for this was that national-conservative resistance remained, and had to remain, an essentially aristocratic movement for too long. Resistance in broader sections of the population, above all in the working class, had been destroyed by the time war broke out by the contradiction between the need to operate in secret and the desire to produce public results.<sup>257</sup> Some structures had survived, mostly in the form of a resumption of social relations within a restricted 'milieu'. Some former trade unionists turned up in the 'counts' circle', i.e. the Kreisau circle, in the unaccustomed company of Moltkes, Yorcks, and Jesuits. But the Nazi rulers' latent fear of 'their' people was essentially groundless.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>252</sup> See, to this effect, Hoffmann, *History of German Resistance*, ch. XI, and Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 265.

<sup>253</sup> This view is taken in Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 245–6; see also Mommsen, 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 581.

<sup>254</sup> This mistaken view is taken in Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 229, 234.

<sup>255</sup> Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 98; see also Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 7.

<sup>256</sup> Kershaw, 'Widerstand ohne Volk', 795; Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät?', 279–80; Geilen, 'Das Widerstandsbild in der Bundeswehr', 63; Mommsen, 'Der militärische Widerstand'; see also the collective work, *Der deutsche Widerstand gegen Hitler: Wahrnehmung und Wertung*.

<sup>257</sup> Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 32–3; Mommsen, *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 15.

<sup>258</sup> See Klaus von Dohnanyi, speech opening the exhibition 'Aufstand des Gewissens: Militärischer Widerstand gegen Hitler und das NS-Regime 1933 bis 1945' in the Paulskirche, Frankfurt am Main, on 25 Jan. 1998, accessible on the following website: [www.blaetter.de/Bilder/dohnanyi.htm](http://www.blaetter.de/Bilder/dohnanyi.htm); Norden, 'Widersetzlichkeit', 81; *Germany and the Second World War*, v/I. 923.



The workers' leaders (trade unionists, Social Democrats, and Communists) could exert a political influence only if they joined forces with the national-conservative groups that had real power. The Social Democrats, Wilhelm Leuschner, Julius Leber, and Gustav Noske, and also Jakob Kaiser, had already established links with the middle-class opposition camp in 1938/9.<sup>259</sup> Goerdeler, on the contrary, was painfully conscious that the opposition movement to which he belonged had virtually no popular support, and that the proposed coup must look like a 'revolution from above'. The attempt to make up for this by getting individual workers' leaders to join the movement was a qualified success because they had no followers. Once the forces of organized labour had been defeated by the Gestapo and many of their functions taken over by the German Labour Front, even Carlo Mierendorff and Theodor Haubach, Adolf Reichwein and Leber, could no longer claim to represent the masses. However, with them the whole programme of what had been essentially upper-middle-class liberal opposition shifted to the left—a move that was criticized by conservative members of the resistance such as Popitz and Hassell.<sup>260</sup>

The military too were at pains to broaden the basis of their movement to overthrow the regime by appealing to a wider political spectrum. Younger officers like Tresckow and Stauffenberg had fewer reservations on this score than many conservative politicians because, in their view, the army had closer ties with the people than any other institution.<sup>261</sup> The change appeared to be essential. The emergence of the National Committee for a 'Free Germany' in 1943 showed the potential power of combined national and Communist agitation, and there was a real danger that national Communist opposition might outstrip national-conservative opposition. Everyone expected that events after the war would follow much the same course as in 1918, and there was every reason to suppose that the Communists would attempt to seize power, possibly with the support of the Soviet army.<sup>262</sup> It was against this background that Adam von Trott zu Solz accused the conspiracy of being a 'gentlemen's club'—an image to be avoided at all costs if the conspirators were to preserve their credibility.<sup>263</sup>

Stauffenberg, on the contrary, imbued with the romantic social ideals of Stefan George and his circle, actually sought contact with the workers' leaders. In so doing, he ignored Goerdeler, whom he regarded as too conservative and a security risk. After the arrest of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke in January 1944, Leuschner and Leber turned to Stauffenberg, a decision in which they were supported by Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg. For Stauffenberg, as a descendant of Gneisenau, the Prussian uprising of 1813 represented a noble ideal, the image of an army leading a popular revolt, whereas Goerdeler was

<sup>259</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 135.

<sup>260</sup> Mommsen, 'Moralische Wiederherstellung', 15, 17–18.

<sup>261</sup> Mommsen, *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 29.

<sup>262</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 186; Kühne, 'Der Judenretter', 33.

<sup>263</sup> Hassell, *Vom anderen Deutschland*, 289; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 137.

more inclined to think along the lines of the authoritarian reforms of Baron von Stein and others. The presence of people like Julius Leber was more or less indispensable to any plan for a general uprising. The fact that Stauffenberg and the former member of the Reichstag became soul-mates was an added stroke of luck. If the events of 1918 were to be repeated, the army leadership must not sever its links with the workers this time as it had before.<sup>264</sup>

Stauffenberg's independent contacts with the workers' leaders made it clear that the head of the military conspiracy was determined not to be regarded merely as the tool of a conservative opposition group. On the contrary, Stauffenberg increasingly pursued an alternative policy within the opposition, part of that policy being to propose Julius Leber as head of a government to be established after the coup, rather than Goerdeler, who had previously been the only candidate for the post. Goerdeler complained bitterly about the 'high-minded general staff officer, who had . . . somehow got it into his head that he would like to try his hand at politics as well'.<sup>265</sup> He told Gisevius: 'Stauffenberg wants a military dictatorship of "true" National Socialists, with the emphasis on "socialists"'.<sup>266</sup> Gisevius even reports that Goerdeler described Stauffenberg as a 'colonel who was one of those officers who had had a brilliant career, courtesy of National Socialism'.<sup>267</sup> That Goerdeler should have referred thus to an officer from a crack cavalry regiment and a scion of the Württemberg nobility gives some idea of the deep bitterness felt by the man who had once been mayor of Leipzig.

He became even more bitter when Stauffenberg tried, through Leber and Reichwein, to contact the sections of the German Communist Party that were engaged in underground activities, an attempt that was to get the two Social Democrats arrested.<sup>268</sup> This time it was Goerdeler's turn to complain of a lack of proper caution, partly because he suspected that this move was a front for a fundamental change of direction, and that Stauffenberg's policy was now to set up a government of workers, peasants, and soldiers<sup>269</sup> and reach a foreign policy arrangement with Moscow. Leber was privy to all the details of the political conspiracy, and his arrest on 5 July 1944 was yet another factor adding to the pressure on Stauffenberg to act. Ultimately, the attempt to turn the conspiracy into a full-scale 'popular uprising' failed because the few remaining workers' opposition groups had also been infiltrated by the Gestapo.

<sup>264</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 284, 295; Mommsen, 'Goerdeler im Widerstand', p.xxxix; id. 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 588; id. *Die Stellung der Sozialisten*, 29.

<sup>265</sup> Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 527–8 n. 46, from Goerdeler's memoirs of November 1944.

<sup>266</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 472. In the light of such statements, it would be quite wrong to suppose that the military conspirators were 'only' concerned to 'get politics back on the right track', Steinbach, 'Soldatischer Widerstand', 45.

<sup>267</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 477.

<sup>268</sup> Herlemann, 'Kommunistischer Widerstand', 40.

<sup>269</sup> Dulles, *Germany's Underground*, 166–7; Mauch, *The Shadow War*, 120; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 188.

## VII. Resistance and Ending the War

### I. ENDING THE WAR AS AN AIM OF MILITARY RESISTANCE ACTIVITY

THE military members of the resistance were not pacifists, either before or during the war. For them, as for most of their civilian allies, war was a legitimate if extreme political instrument, and the moral justification for war was bound up with the requirement to strike a reasonable balance between advantages and risks.<sup>1</sup> Beck, in his capacity as chief of the army general staff, concluded on the basis of a sober (and ideologically unbiased) assessment of the facts that the risks were incalculable, and he accordingly rejected Hitler's plans for war in 1938/9.<sup>2</sup> Resistance to war in the period between the *Anschluß* (the union with Austria) and the attack on Poland was therefore marked by the attempt to avoid a war at that juncture. That was the principal objective. The efforts to exploit Hitler's loss of face on the diplomatic front, in order to provoke a showdown with what was clearly a criminal regime, came later. The shift from an anti-war policy to an anti-Hitler policy was a gradual one.<sup>3</sup>

However, the national-conservative alternative at this point was based on what appeared at least to be a partial identity of interests in the field of foreign policy. True, Hitler used diplomatic demands to bring about a war he was determined to have, whereas men like Beck, Ernst Freiherr von Weizsäcker, and Goerdeler were prepared to contemplate war only as a last resort to achieve (in fact much the same) diplomatic objectives. But to an outside observer, the difference was not really clear. The numerous contacts known to have been made during this period, particularly with Britain,<sup>4</sup> suffered from the fact that from the British point of view the differences between Hitler's policy and the policy of his opponents in Germany were virtually imperceptible: if concessions were to be made, they argued, then why not make them to Hitler? Why help to overthrow his government first and then make the concessions he had demanded to someone else?<sup>5</sup> Britain's hesitant and ultimately acquiescent attitude during the Sudetenland crisis in the autumn of 1938 did not arise from a false perception of the German resistance. The fact was that the revisionist ideas on foreign policy that the members of the resistance conveyed to London differed too little from the official line taken by the Nazi regime.

<sup>1</sup> On Beck, see, for example, Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 152; on Weizsäcker see Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 38–9; Wentker, 'Widerstand gegen Hitler', 5.

<sup>2</sup> Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 284–5.

<sup>3</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 33–4, 38–9; Müller, *General Ludwig Beck*, 308; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 99.

<sup>4</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition'; Deutsch, *The Conspiracy*; Kettenacker, 'Widerstand'; Klemperer, *German Resistance*; Müller, *Der deutsche Widerstand und das Ausland*; see also Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 74–94, 195–219.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 78–9; also, to the same effect, Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 192.

Opposition disappointment over Britain's policy of acquiescence was not the only reason why the resistance was so lame for the next few years.<sup>6</sup> The real trouble was that the political aim that had united the opposition was no more: all hopes of avoiding a war ended on 1 September 1939.<sup>7</sup>

A different approach was adopted in the efforts in the winter of 1939/40 to halt the German offensives and prevent the war from spreading. In this case too, the aim was not to overthrow the National Socialist regime. There is no firm evidence that there really was a 'Zossen action group' (named after the wartime army general staff headquarters), another 'conspiracy within the conspiracy' that endeavoured to pursue this course, unlike the other plotters.<sup>8</sup> It was not easy for officers with traditional values, and with experience of the First World War and its outcome, to come to terms with the idea of assassinating the supreme head of state and organizing a coup in the middle of the war. The fact that Halder and Canaris were both so keen for the other to take responsibility in October 1939<sup>9</sup> is symptomatic of the general malaise. Gen. Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb may have toyed with the idea of a strike by leading commanders, but that was as far as opposition was to go that winter.<sup>10</sup>

There was general agreement that an attack on France in the winter of 1939/40 must be prevented because it was most unlikely to be successful—especially at that time of year, on the operational lines followed in 1914<sup>11</sup>—but the opposition crumbled before Hitler's massive threats against the generals<sup>12</sup> and French inaction, which was taken for weakness. Further contacts, this time through the Vatican, produced no results.<sup>13</sup> Only a few were absolutely determined to use the impending extension of the war to overthrow the regime, as Col. Hans Oster of the Abwehr confided to the Dutch military attaché, Col. Gijsbertus Jacobus Sas—a confidence that met with no response from the government in The Hague.<sup>14</sup> Oster had naturally told his fellow-conspirators very little about his contacts which, according to the views prevailing at the time, represented the dishonourable step from treason to high treason. When the counter-espionage authorities got wind of Oster's activities in the course of their normal duties, Canaris protected his former friend but was careful to keep his distance thereafter.<sup>15</sup> This radical conduct led to isolation both within the military opposition and in relation to Oster's foreign interlocutors. The commander-in-chief of the Dutch army considered Oster to be 'a despicable piece of work'.<sup>16</sup> But Oster's primary objective, namely

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 132.

<sup>7</sup> Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 112–13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 123–4, without citing names or sources.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 128; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 179.

<sup>10</sup> Leeb, *Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, 53–4, 199 n. 154.

<sup>11</sup> Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 75.

<sup>12</sup> Messerschmidt, 'Motive', 107; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 177.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 211–14; Müller, *Bis zur letzten Konsequenz*, ch. V.

<sup>14</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 98–9.

<sup>15</sup> Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr', 412.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 218; see also Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 355.

to take action against Hitler, was based on the unshakeable conviction that any action that was taken later, while the Führer was conducting a victorious campaign for example, would be bound to fail, so there must in principle be no more military successes.<sup>17</sup>

Even the impending attack on the Soviet Union, which was to embroil Germany in a war on two fronts—a consummation devoutly to be avoided—and which ultimately threatened to be *finis Germaniae*, did not prompt a revival of military resistance. Underestimates of Soviet strength and overestimates of the strategic value of the operational successes of 1940 raised too many expectations of a speedy victory.<sup>18</sup> The national-conservative officers were too much at one with the regime in its determination to conduct a crusade against Bolshevism.<sup>19</sup> The readiness and resolve to resist was rekindled at last by a recognition of the criminal nature of the war, irrespective of any consideration as to how that war was to be brought to an end.

However any efforts by the resistance to overthrow the regime must now inevitably raise the question of how that was to be achieved. Was there anything to be gained—in view of the western Allies' insistence on unconditional surrender—from an early cessation of hostilities? Would it prevent enemy forces, notably the Soviet army, from occupying the Reich? These questions, which became increasingly pressing as the country faced defeat, had to be addressed before the basic premisses of future foreign policy could be discussed. The first signs of impending disaster appeared in the winter crisis of 1941/2. As already mentioned, there were plenty of warnings: the army high command and the head of army equipment and commander of the replacement army, in particular, frequently pointed out that the Reich had limited resources. Resistance was now imperative if the German nation was to be saved from complete annihilation.<sup>20</sup>

These reasons might lead to the mistaken conclusion that 'the attitude of those opposed to Hitler's policy of extending the war was based not so much on principle as on criticism of Hitler's assessment of the situation and the dangerous conclusions he drew',<sup>21</sup> and that the resistance was thus largely opportunist. This interpretation neglects the other, even more potent source of radical resistance to the entire system, namely a deep indignation at the criminal nature of Hitler's war both at home and abroad.

The opposition had decided at an early stage that the end of National Socialist rule was an essential prerequisite for any attempt to end the war. No one was prepared to negotiate with Hitler; even he knew that.<sup>22</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> A wider distribution of dates for attacks is reported by Munich lawyer Dr Josef Müller ('Ochsensepp') in collaboration with the Belgian ambassador to the Vatican: Gellermann, . . . und lauschten für Hitler, 107–10.

<sup>18</sup> Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 437–41.

<sup>19</sup> Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 6; Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 358.

<sup>20</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 42.

<sup>21</sup> Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 361.

<sup>22</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 93 (29 July 1944), 402–3 (18 Sept. 1944); statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 378–9; Rommel, *The Rommel*

commanders of the army on the eastern front proved to be unapproachable—Kluge vacillated and Manstein refused outright—so thoughts turned to the possibility of independent action in the west, where a powerful group of rebels had gathered round Gen. Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel. In practice, however, it proved difficult to initiate cooperation with the western Allies. It was also desirable to avoid reviving the legend that the regime had been betrayed, so in the end no independent action was taken in the west.<sup>23</sup>

The Kreisau circle on the other hand, which had close personal connections with the 20 July conspirators, was not concerned with schemes to bring about the downfall of the National Socialist Reich but with plans for the period after the Nazi regime had come to an end. As early as April 1941—before the country was at war with the Soviet Union—military defeat was already a foregone conclusion: ‘Germany has been defeated, that is to say she is no longer in a position to continue the war. This situation could be the result of a variety of factors: the physical exhaustion on the part of the people, the industrial exhaustion of the nation, political changes within Germany, or disturbances and rebellions in the occupied territories which, because of the extent of the occupied areas and the way in which they are treated, could not be stemmed and would eventually lead to an armed invasion by the Anglo-Saxon powers.’<sup>24</sup> Radical change must not be brought about by the resistance: the regime must dig its own grave. The Reich might be occupied, but only after the collapse of the system: ‘The Reich government will endeavour, with all the means at its disposal, to prevent enemy forces from entering the territory of the Reich.’ But this bold statement was followed immediately by the proviso: ‘. . . should it prove impossible to delay occupation by enemy forces’.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in the late summer of 1943, the Kreisau circle’s principal foreign policy objective was still not to bring about an immediate end to hostilities. In their view, an attempt should still be made to prevent the Soviet army from entering the territory of the Reich (occupation by the western Allies seemed to present a less acute problem in view of the war situation).

As to whether unconditional surrender and the ensuing occupation could be avoided, opinion among the conspirators was divided. Even in the summer of 1944, the worthy middle-class citizens in Goerdeler’s group still had highly ambitious foreign policy aims which, in hindsight, inevitably seem completely unrealistic. They spoke of ‘restoring the 1914 Reich border in the east, keeping Austria and the Sudetenland within the Reich, securing autonomy for

*Papers*, 427; see also, based on the latter, Remy, *Mythos Rommel*, 178, and Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 307. Goerdeler on the contrary appears to have continued for some time to hope that Hitler could be persuaded to seek a political end to the war; in this respect, the statements in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 100–1 (30 July 1944) are consistent with other sources.

<sup>23</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 17–18.

<sup>24</sup> Moltke memorandum, ‘Final position, aims and tasks’, first version, 24 Apr. 1941, reproduced in Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler*, 317–28, 322.

<sup>25</sup> First instruction to local administrators, 9 Aug. 1943, reproduced in Roon, *Neuordnung in Widerstand*, 567–70 (not in English); special instruction, 9 Aug. 1943, reproduced *ibid.* 570–1.



Alsace and Lorraine, taking over the Tyrol as far as Bolzano and Merano',<sup>26</sup> and of course 'avoiding any form of occupation'. Even when he was in prison, Goerdeler wrote that he had realized just before 20 July that defeat was inevitable, but had even then still been determined to reach an agreement with the western Allies under which the German army in the west would remain intact and be redeployed on the eastern front. That would have been the exact reverse of the German army's move west after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the First World War, and it would have had the added advantage of avoiding the need for assassination, which Goerdeler had always secretly opposed.<sup>27</sup> Other members of Goerdeler's circle harboured similar illusions. Speidel, for example, who was otherwise a perfectly sensible general staff officer and historian, hoped for peace on reasonable terms, 'an armistice—not unconditional surrender—to be followed by peace negotiations which must point the way to order, not chaos',<sup>28</sup> in other words not a second Versailles.

These ideas assumed that the German Reich under new leadership and the western powers had common interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The assumption was ultimately based on an interpretation of the war as an aberration in European policy, for which Hitler alone was responsible. This mistaken assessment formed the basis for a policy, pursued until the summer of 1944, under which the western Allies would be persuaded in the course of negotiations to sanction Germany's territorial gains since 1938. It was to become increasingly clear in the course of the war that these ideas were completely unrealistic. The group of conspirators on the eastern front, on the other hand, were all convinced in June/July 1944 that the war must be brought to an end in the west as soon as possible, and that the war on the eastern front could not continue once that had happened. At all events, Goerdeler's pet idea of transferring the western army to the eastern front never arose here, probably because the people in Army Group Centre took a much more realistic view of the matter.

Even Leber, who had initially hoped for 'peace with honour', was obliged to recognize by the winter of 1943/4 that 'complete surrender can no longer be avoided'.<sup>29</sup> Of course, by this time Leber had already come under the influence of Stauffenberg, who had reached a realistic position on these matters much earlier. In March 1944, Stauffenberg still believed that the western Allies could not very well continue to wage war against Germany if it was no longer under National Socialist rule—a view disputed by the experienced diplomat Adam von Trott zu Solz, who accused Stauffenberg of conducting foreign policy 'in a vacuum'.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Goerdeler's proposals, Stauffenberg's only remaining

<sup>26</sup> Note from Capt. Kaiser to Stauffenberg, probably sent at Goerdeler's request, 25 May 1944, in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 126–7 (2 Aug. 1944) and 136 (4 Aug. 1944); Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 750 n. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 387, 400.

<sup>29</sup> Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg*, 285.

<sup>28</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 173.

<sup>30</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 198 (11 Aug. 1944), 502 (29 Nov. 1944); Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 473; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 283.



foreign policy 'wish' at the end of June 1944 was that Austria should continue to be part of the Reich.<sup>31</sup> In conversation with Gisevius, whom he had not met before, Stauffenberg expressed the view on 12 July 1944 (according to Gisevius, who is not a completely reliable witness) that it would now be impossible to avoid 'full-scale occupation, with all that that entailed'.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly the success of the Allied invasion had induced a more realistic frame of mind, since Stauffenberg had apparently still believed on the eve of the invasion that there was 'a very good chance, certainly 50:50' that the enemy forces would be driven back into the sea.<sup>33</sup> On 10 July 1944, Stauffenberg's cousin, Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker, arrived in Berlin from Paris and reported on a conversation he had had with Field Marshal Rommel on the previous day. The western front could only hold out for a few more weeks, he said.<sup>34</sup> The collapse in the east (Army Group Centre), which Stauffenberg, Tresckow, and Stieff had long expected, would then be followed by a corresponding collapse in the west—further confirmation that, just before the projected assassination and coup d'état, the foreign policy options for any government established after the coup were fast diminishing. In this situation, the conspirators' only reasons for taking action were moral ones.<sup>35</sup>

The ideas of the various resistance groups varied right to the end. Goerdeler never agreed to this position. In mid-June 1944, he was still engaged in hot debate with Leber as to whether occupation of the Reich could be avoided.<sup>36</sup> On the evening of 16 July 1944, Claus and Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, Witzleben's adjutant, Capt. Ulrich Wilhelm Graf Schwerin von Schwanenfeld, Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, the diplomat Adam von Trott zu Solz, Col. Georg Hansen, and Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker all foregathered in Berlin-Wannsee for a last conference. The various positions were set out once again. In the end, a 'central solution' prevailed, namely assassination and coup d'état, to be followed by an attempt to negotiate detailed terms for separate surrender in the west, the negotiations to be conducted by the commanders-in-chief in person.<sup>37</sup> Foreign policy differences were a further reason for the growing disagreement between the civil and military leaders of the conspiracy. If Stauffenberg repeatedly insisted that an armistice must be negotiated by the commanders-in-chief themselves, he did so partly in order to cut Goerdeler out.<sup>38</sup> And in the end, he managed to get both Leber and Beck on his side.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 127 (2 Aug. 1944); Hamerow, *Road to the Wolf's Lair*.

<sup>32</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 308–9.

<sup>33</sup> John, 'Am achten Jahrestag'; id, *Falsch und zu spät*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 86; Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 433–4; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 360 (6 Sept. 1944).

<sup>35</sup> Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 211 (14 Aug. 1944).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 91–2 (28 July 1944), 101–2 (30 July 1944), 175 (8 Aug. 1944).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 111 (31 July 1944), 174–5 (8 Aug. 1944), 506–7 (29 Nov. 1944); John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 59; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 191; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 295.

<sup>39</sup> Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 435.

What steps would actually have been taken to seek an armistice immediately after the coup had been successfully brought off would have depended on the balance of power within the movement at that point.<sup>40</sup>

Efforts to end the war were not confined to the conspirators. Ribbentrop and Fritz Todt, Speer, and even Himmler had expressed similar concern.<sup>41</sup> Leading figures in the Wehrmacht, including Erhard Milch and Fellgiebel, Canaris, Gerd von Rundstedt, and Rommel—members of the resistance as well as marginal figures and generals and admirals who were loyal to the regime—had periodically called for a speedy end to the war. In addition to national-conservative opposition plans to end the war by coup, ways and means of ending hostilities within the parameters of the system were also being considered.<sup>42</sup> But the Third Reich had no apparatus for systematic reflection about ending the war or even—on the lines of the fascist Grand Council in Rome—for legitimate action against the Führer. As we have shown, Hitler himself was responsible for the conduct of the war, both at home and abroad, and the deteriorating military situation merely caused him to press on with an increasingly radical programme to transform German society in the short time that was left to him.<sup>43</sup> Those who did not want to go down that road ultimately had no alternative but to attempt a coup d'état. In the memorable phrase of the young cavalry officer Roland von Hößlin: 'A nation of 80 million people cannot, in my view, re-enact the Goths' last stand at Mount Vesuvius.'<sup>44</sup>

If the 'Goths' last battle on Mt. Vesuvius' was to be avoided, it was essential to maintain relations with other countries in order to investigate the possibilities, first, of preventing a war and, later, of ending it on terms that were acceptable to Germany. Up to the end of 1941, Britain was top of the list. France was considered to be less accommodating and also appeared, as a result of its domestic problems, to follow the British lead. When America entered the war, the US government too had to be considered as a possible interlocutor.

Most of the many resistance meetings with contacts before September 1939 took place in London. Family ties or personal introductions, notably through Adam von Trott zu Solz, facilitated these contacts, but Germans were not automatically free to visit other countries even before the war, so meetings were also arranged from time to time at the British embassy in Berlin. Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin and the Kordt brothers, Erich and Theo, travelled to London for secret talks. However, the dividing line between official diplomatic *démarches* (both Kordt brothers worked for the Reich foreign ministry) and opposition efforts cannot always have been clear to the British side.<sup>45</sup> After the outbreak of war, meetings with contacts had perforce to take place in

<sup>40</sup> Heinemann, 'Illusionen', 1066–7.

<sup>41</sup> Helldorff attempted in vain to cover this in his trial before the people's court, see Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 417.

<sup>42</sup> Wegner, 'Hitler', 494–5; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 281.

<sup>43</sup> Wegner, 'Hitler', 506; Wette, 'Zwischen Untergangspathos und Überlebenswillen', 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 373 (9 Sept. 1944)

<sup>45</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 82–5, 141–2; Parssinen, *Oster Conspiracy*, 100–3.

neutral countries: Sweden or Switzerland, Spain or Portugal, or Turkey. Contact could also be made through the Vatican. Britain had no diplomatic representation in the Holy See, but the Pope was on good terms with the western powers. The Munich lawyer Dr Joseph Müller, who knew Pope Pius XII from the days when he had been papal nuncio in the Bavarian capital, was to play an important role for the resistance. Oster 'enrolled' Müller, on the strength of his good connections, as a reserve officer in the Abwehr outpost in Munich. His visits to the Eternal City were part of the great game, and Müller was able to establish a network of secret service contacts in Rome.<sup>46</sup>

Another important place for putting out peace feelers was Sweden. In 1940, the Kreisau circle began to cultivate connections it had made there through the Ecumenical Council of Churches.<sup>47</sup> The first serious attempt to come to an arrangement with the British government was made in May 1942, through Sweden, when the bishop of Chichester, George Bell, spent some time there. Trott too visited Sweden in October 1943—as a representative of the Reich foreign ministry.<sup>48</sup> These initiatives were not confined to members of the resistance in the strict sense of the term. In addition to Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer of the non-Nazi wing of the Protestant Church (the *Bekennende Kirche*) and his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, there were dubious figures like a certain Dr Ludwig Weißbauer, who claimed to be acting on Hitler's orders and who tried to establish links with the British ambassador in Sweden. In Britain, the Foreign Office was thoroughly tired of all such initiatives. Sir Robert Vansittart wrote to his foreign minister: 'We have had more than enough of Dahlerus, Goerdeler, Weißbauer, and their like.'<sup>49</sup> Attempts by the British to form a clear idea of the resistance were not helped by the fact that many of the initiatives must have seemed uncoordinated and spasmodic—it was almost impossible to make any long-term plans because of the travel restrictions. In May 1942, for example, Bonhoeffer and Hans Schönfeld, the director of the Ecumenical Council for Practising Christians, arrived in Sigtuna at the same time to see Bishop Bell. Both, presumably independently, wanted to present peace proposals to the British government.<sup>50</sup>

However, Bonhoeffer was there under the auspices of the Abwehr, as a secret agent so to speak, and this immediately raised doubts about his credibility. Eden 'appeared to be most impressed with the bishop's detailed report, but he pointed out that both clergymen might unwittingly have been used by the German Government to put out peace feelers, and that similar attempts to make contact were being made at the time in Turkey and Spain'.<sup>51</sup> At Venlo

<sup>46</sup> Müller, *Bis zur letzten Konsequenz*, 80–6; Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 149; Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 98; Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr', 413.

<sup>47</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 248–9 (17 Aug. 1944); Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler*, 191.

<sup>48</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 269–80; Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler*, 192–3.

<sup>49</sup> Gellerman, *Geheime Wege*, 31–2.

<sup>50</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 269–72; Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 215–16; Klemperer, *German Resistance*, 282.

<sup>51</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 272.

in November 1939, the SD had sent men claiming to represent opposition groups to lure two British intelligence officers into leaving the Netherlands, which was still neutral, and crossing the border into Germany, where they were arrested. The Sicherheitsdienst had previously confined its activities exclusively to Party matters, but this was poaching on Abwehr preserves and Adm. Canaris had been far from pleased.<sup>52</sup> How could the British be sure that this was not a similar ploy? The German leaders naturally wanted to drive a wedge between the western Allies and the Soviets, and what could be better for this purpose than getting London to agree to a separate peace?

All earlier contacts through resistance connections with the Church had also come to nothing, for example when Bonhoeffer attended World Council of Churches meetings in Zurich and Geneva in February 1941 and when he visited the president of the council, Visser 't Hooft, again in September.<sup>53</sup> And Ulrich von Hassell received no more than vague indications that the British might be willing to engage in talks, when he discussed the matter with League of Nations commissioner and historian Carl Jacob Burckhardt.<sup>54</sup>

Istanbul too was the scene of secret contacts with members of the German opposition. With Hitler's support, the head of the Wehrmacht foreign intelligence office, Adm. Canaris, and the German ambassador in Ankara, Franz von Papen (the former chancellor who had also served as a minister under Hitler), presented peace proposals through the US naval attaché there, George H. Earle.<sup>55</sup> In June 1943, Trott was in Turkey on official foreign ministry business, but he also took soundings for the resistance about the western Allies' willingness to make peace.<sup>56</sup> In this case too, it must have been difficult for outsiders to distinguish between the two areas of activity. The Abwehr lawyer Helmuth James Graf von Moltke visited Istanbul twice, in July and December 1943, both times on orders from Canaris. But the Abwehr had changed and lost much of its weight after Oster's departure. Members of the resistance were now a minority in the foreign intelligence section,<sup>57</sup> and their leaders had been cut out of the loop. It is almost impossible to determine, in hindsight, whether Canaris sent Moltke to Istanbul in order to support the new resistance that was emerging in another quarter, whether he regarded the mission as just another move in the great game, or whether it was his way of trying to spare Germany the worst. If these questions still cannot be resolved today, it should come as no surprise that the advances of the head of the intelligence service were received with caution by the western Allies at the time, especially

<sup>52</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, *Der Verschwörer*, 174; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 157, 181.

<sup>53</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 269.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 259; Hassell, *Vom anderen Deutschland*, 229.

<sup>55</sup> Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 572; Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports*, 416-17; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 743 n. 69, takes the version given in Buchheit, *Der deutsche Geheimdienst*, 427-8. This in turn refers to Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 594-5, and Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports*, 417. Papen covers this episode at some length but does not mention Canaris's part in it; Wedemeyer gives only a brief and marginal account but names Canaris among others behind the plan.

<sup>56</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 277.

<sup>57</sup> Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr', 407.

as he occasionally employed rather dubious emissaries who sometimes worked for the SD. Canaris and the head of the SD, Walter Schellenberg, had very similar aims and went about things in much the same way.<sup>58</sup>

However, the foreign policy line-up and the military situation had both changed considerably. Stalingrad, Tunis, the first Allied 1,000-bomber raids on German cities, and the collapse of the German U-boat campaign in the Atlantic marked a military turning point. Also the Soviet Union, in establishing the National Committee for a 'Free Germany', had shown that it intended to pursue its own policy vis-à-vis Germany, regardless of the western Allies' insistence on unconditional surrender. Was this perhaps a reason for investigating the possibility of a separate peace?<sup>59</sup> The people who actually met the German emissaries and spoke to them in person were usually convinced of the honourable intentions of their interlocutors. But the authorities in Washington and London did not trust Trott or Moltke or Canaris or Schellenberg.<sup>60</sup> The fact that Moltke was arrested on 18 January 1944, shortly after he left Istanbul, may have added to his credibility after the event, but it did not improve the position of the conspirators who were behind him.

The subsequent peace initiatives, including Trott's visits to Stockholm in March and June/July 1944, were equally fruitless. Ultimately, all attempts at rapprochement were greeted with suspicion on the British and American side, and no one in London or Washington was prepared to call the unity of the Big Three into question. The repressive measures of the Nazi system, which included a ban on listening to foreign broadcasts, meant that only a chosen few, who appeared to be closely involved in the system, had any contact with the outside world and thus with the country's enemies. The support for resistance claims in the Abwehr and parts of the foreign ministry was consequently a mixed blessing. It afforded opportunities for such contacts, but it also meant that the western Allies were less inclined to take them seriously.

There was a further factor in the equation. In Britain, responsibility for all attempts to undermine the Nazi system from within was delegated to the Special Operations Executive under the overall control of the Labour politician Hugh Dalton. The Roosevelt administration in the United States took a generally liberal left-wing line, which also applied to its policy on Germany. In the research and analysis section of the US secret service, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the various resistance groups and their efforts to contact western countries outside Germany were evaluated by left-wing intellectuals like the German émigré and social philosopher Herbert Marcuse. People on both sides of the Atlantic—unaware of the real conditions obtaining in the Reich—expected German opposition to take the form of a revolt

<sup>58</sup> Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 568; Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr', 414.

<sup>59</sup> Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 570.

<sup>60</sup> On the failure of the Moltke mission, see Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', and *From Hitler's Doorstep*, note on doc. 2-133, 595.

by the masses, possibly in response to the devastating air raids.<sup>61</sup> Names like Moltke, Gisevius,<sup>62</sup> and Goerdeler evoked images of Prussia, *Junkers*, and militarism. These, so Marcuse and his colleagues believed, were the ideological source of the whole National Socialist disaster, and they were accordingly disposed to fight them, not support them.<sup>63</sup> The Americans and the British routinely arranged for emissaries of the Abwehr to deal with members of the intelligence services rather than diplomats, and once the war started members of the opposition had no further contact with the real decision-makers.

## 2. THE SECRET SERVICE ASPECTS OF THE RESISTANCE

### (a) *Allen W. Dulles in Berne and Zurich*

This fundamental antagonism also stood in the way of the intensive contacts between the US secret service, the OSS, and Goerdeler's resistance group, which had developed in Switzerland between the OSS representative Allen W. Dulles (later head of the CIA) and Hans Bernd Gisevius, who was on intimate terms with Goerdeler, Helldorff, and Nebe. Dulles was a man of the world, a cultivated man who enjoyed the good life and the company of witty and intelligent women.<sup>64</sup> He arrived in Switzerland shortly before the United States entered the war, and started getting in touch with German émigrés there and also with visiting German businessmen, politicians, and secret agents. In a relatively short time, one of the centres of the American secret service, the OSS, was established in Berne under his leadership. Dulles's most important contacts were the businessman Eduard Schulte, through whom the world first learned of the extermination camps in the east,<sup>65</sup> and one of the most important agents of the Second World War, Fritz Kolbe ('George Wood') of the German foreign ministry. 'George Wood' was responsible, among other things, for exposing 'Cicero', the Abwehr spy in the British embassy in Ankara, a feat that greatly enhanced Dulles's reputation among his OSS masters.<sup>66</sup> They were also most impressed when Hans Bernd Gisevius gave his American interlocutor precise and relatively early warning of the German V-weapons, including details of the production locations.<sup>67</sup> But Dulles, who tended to favour the Republicans, never had as much influence on the direction of US foreign policy during the war as he would have his German contacts believe.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 16; Mauch, 'Subversive Kriegführung', 52; Middendorf, 'Verstoßenes Wissen'. <sup>62</sup> Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, 176.

<sup>63</sup> Probabilities of a German Collapse, 9 and 23 Sept. 1943 (British), and 21 and 25 Oct. 1943 (American), NA, RG 165 ABC 381 Germany Sec 1-A . . ., cited in Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 17, 42 n. 18.

<sup>64</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, 8–9; Mauch, *The Shadow War*, 109.

<sup>65</sup> Laqueur and Breitman, *Breaking the Silence*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 122–4.

<sup>66</sup> Mauch, *The Shadow War*, 111.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 118; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 506 (29 Nov. 1944); for Goerdeler on the subject of Gisevius' opinion of Dulles, see *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 364 (7 Sept. 1944).



After a year in Switzerland, Dulles was in any case not really disposed to give much credence to the idea of a conspiracy in Germany.<sup>69</sup> Only in 1943 did he really start urging Washington to take 'his' opposition group seriously. This meant, above all, offering the German resistance an alternative to the demand, issued at the Casablanca conference, for 'unconditional surrender'.<sup>70</sup> But Washington absolutely refused to do any such thing and continued, until the summer of 1944, to take the position that Dulles should use his contacts primarily to obtain intelligence. The central OSS authorities regarded men like Gisevius and Moltke above all as spies, whose personal safety was of no account.<sup>71</sup> Even Dulles had long regarded Himmler rather than Goerdeler as a possible alternative to Hitler, and he saw the gradual takeover of the Abwehr by the Reich security main office, the RSHA, as a sign of this trend.<sup>72</sup> In February 1944, when he was asked to suggest men who might form a new government in the event of invasion followed by an unexpectedly rapid German collapse on the western front, the only member of the resistance Dulles could come up with, apart from Gisevius (who had once wanted to be head of the Gestapo and was suspect for that reason),<sup>73</sup> was Josef Wirth. He did not mention Goerdeler, or Trott, with whom he was personally acquainted, or any of the others.<sup>74</sup> He thought Kluge and Manstein were the best candidates among the German generals, but did not believe either of them would turn against Hitler.<sup>75</sup>

The Goerdeler group, to whom he gave the code name 'Breakers', were important to Dulles but they were by no means central to his work in Berne. Despite his close connections with Abwehr contacts, Dulles had no compunction about keeping on good terms with the SD at the same time.<sup>76</sup> A close collaborator of Dulles, the German-American Gero von Schulze-Gaevernitz, son-in-law of the industrial magnate Hugo Stinnes, supplier of raw materials for war production in the First World War and German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP) member in the Reichstag, was involved in 'Operation SEVEN', a secret service operation to smuggle Jews out of Germany to Switzerland. However, not only did 'Operation SEVEN' lead—as a result of financial irregularities—to the first major SD incursion into Abwehr territory, it also seems to have been exceptionally lucrative for the OSS man.<sup>77</sup> Probably the most successful project to hasten the end of the war was the surrender of the German forces in northern Italy (Operation SUNRISE), engineered by

<sup>69</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 1-4 (telegram, 6 Dec. 1942), 24.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 1-11 (telegram 278, 13 Jan. 1943), 30, doc. 1-12 (telegram 314, 14 Jan. 1943), 30-1.

<sup>71</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 23; Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 580.

<sup>72</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 42 n. 11.

<sup>73</sup> Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 401.

<sup>74</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3-39 (telegram 2307-11, 15 Feb. 1944), 218-19.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 1-70 (telegram 3545, 12 June 1943), 72.

<sup>76</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 42 n. 11; *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 1-103 (telegram 534, 2 Aug. 1943), 94.

<sup>77</sup> Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, 174; for a general account of the facts, see *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 504 (29 Nov. 1944); Fliess, 'Unternehmen Sieben'; Meyer, *Unternehmen Sieben*.



Dulles and Schulze-Gaevernitz, with the assistance of Himmler's long-time adjutant SS-Obergruppenführer and Waffen-SS Gen. Karl Wolff.<sup>78</sup> Dulles and the entire American secret service had long regarded the 'Breakers' as just one of a number of useful contacts inside the Reich, and his superiors in the United States considered that the National Committee for a 'Free Germany' might well prove to be more important than the nebulous group associated with Goerdeler.<sup>79</sup>

The essential problem in all Dulles's contacts with Germans was the question of the direction Germany would take after the war. Would it turn to the Soviet Union or to the west? He constantly put this question to Fritz Kolbe, alias 'George Wood', and it also preoccupied him in his dealings with Gisevius and the latter's close associate Eduard Waetjen. In his telegrams to Washington, Dulles repeatedly painted a picture of an internal power struggle between Himmler, Bormann, and Ribbentrop over the question of whether to turn east or west, and to which side the German Reich should offer to surrender. It was very easy to get the impression that the 'Breakers' were just one of a number of factions within Germany that were competing for power after the impending collapse.<sup>80</sup>

Goerdeler's ideas about foreign policy drifted further and further away from reality in the first half of 1944. As Gisevius was his only contact with the outside world, Gisevius must have been the source of Goerdeler's excessively optimistic, not to say imaginative, notion that the west was prepared to negotiate. Gisevius claims<sup>81</sup> that he himself expressed doubts to Beck as to whether the Allies would be prepared to recognize a new German government. But it should be noted that this 'blatantly contradicts' other statements to the Gestapo.<sup>82</sup> Dulles himself repeatedly reported—partly, no doubt, in response to similar indications—that he had given the German resistance no reason to hope for any change in the hard line taken by the west,<sup>83</sup> but he appears nevertheless to have given Gisevius and Waetjen some illusions on the subject. Perhaps for that reason, he insisted that the British should not have access to his reports on the 'Breakers', which suggests that he himself was aware of the disruptive effect his connections might have on the unity of the anti-Hitler coalition.<sup>84</sup> It was important to keep these matters from the British but it was, of course, even more important not to allow the Soviets to get wind of them,

<sup>78</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, 14; Schiemann, 'Operation Sunrise'.

<sup>79</sup> Bungert, *Das Nationalkomitee*, 301.

<sup>80</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3–39, (telegram 2307–11, 15 Feb. 1944), 235.

<sup>81</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 485.

<sup>82</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 248 (17 Aug. 1944) and 364 (7 Sept. 1944). Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 396, 539, is unable to explain this contradiction but Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 585 n. 29, assumes an *ex post facto* falsification for political reasons, through the incidentally highly unreliable book by Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*. It is also clear from other sources, including Gisevius' own account of conversations with Goerdeler, Helldorff, and others, that he habitually reported that the Allies were prepared to talk. See also Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 585 n. 29.

<sup>83</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3–82 (telegram 2714–16, 6 Apr. 1944), 263.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 3–119 (telegram 3377–79, 8 May 1944), 286; Mauch, *The Shadow War*, 118.

as it might influence their attitude to the Alliance. Dulles had no idea how closely the two were connected. The spy Kim Philby, in the German section of the Foreign Office, was keeping the Russians informed of every move the German resistance made.<sup>85</sup>

In the end, Dulles, like many others, was extremely surprised by the attempted coup d'état on 20 July 1944, although he had suspected that something unusual was brewing 'in the north'.<sup>86</sup> He was in good company. All the foreign contacts established by the resistance had not sufficed to prepare the governments of the western Allies for a military putsch to overthrow the regime and bring about an early end to the war.<sup>87</sup> Dulles had passed some spectacular intelligence on to Washington and some that was one-sided and therefore flawed,<sup>88</sup> but none of it affected American policy vis-à-vis the resistance at any point. 'Dulles's main motive—a motive that was well understood but certainly not approved of in Washington—was fear that the Red Army would advance too far into Central Europe.'<sup>89</sup> In his assessment of the resistance, he relied very much on information from Gisevius, who in turn spoke only for the Goerdeler group. The increasing difference between Goerdeler and Stauffenberg was noted in Dulles's reports at an early stage. Gisevius obviously played down Stauffenberg's role at first (his name does not appear in any report before 20 July 1944)<sup>90</sup> and then deliberately worked on Dulles's political fears. Unlike the Goerdeler group, with its western liberal leanings, Stauffenberg, he said, wanted to look to the east and conclude a separate peace with the Soviet Union. He was bent on establishing a 'government of workers and peasants'.<sup>91</sup> The name of 'Yorck von Wartenburg', dropped occasionally in the course of conversation, also evoked images of a popular uprising and a surprise turn to the east.<sup>92</sup> Of course, as is clear from earlier statements, this was not the case. It was a false representation of the policy of seeking a broader measure of working-class support, a policy advocated not only by Stauffenberg but also by Julius Leber and ultimately even by Ludwig Beck.<sup>93</sup> This malicious attack on the leader of the military conspiracy—clearly now regarded as a rival organization—was no doubt prompted partly by the

<sup>85</sup> Knightley, *Philby*, 106–10.

<sup>86</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 4–14 (telegram 4085, 12 July 1944), 330.

<sup>87</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 28.

<sup>88</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, 16, speaks of an 'intelligence coup of the first order'; that might be something of an exaggeration.

<sup>89</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 37.

<sup>90</sup> Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, 198, gives no evidence for his theory that Dulles knew about Stauffenberg but dared not mention him by name in a telegram. In fact, Dulles reported by telegram on his top spy in the German foreign office and all the other military conspirators (up to and including Fromm). In a telegram dispatched on 25 July 1944, he himself admits that he underestimated Stauffenberg's role, see *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 4–33 (telegram 4222–24), 348.

<sup>91</sup> Mauch, *Schattenkrieg gegen Hitler*, 170 (not in English).

<sup>92</sup> Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 590. In the immediate post-war period, Gisevius did not mention any such tendency on Stauffenberg's part to look to the east, see Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports*, 419–22.

<sup>93</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 188.

fact that Stauffenberg had succeeded in breaking Gisevius' long-standing near-monopoly on clandestine contacts with the western Allies. Stauffenberg had his own contact with the west.<sup>94</sup>

(b) *Otto John in Madrid*

Otto John was the Lufthansa representative in Madrid, but also occasionally worked for the Abwehr. In 1942, Goerdeler entrusted him with the task of establishing secret connections abroad, notably with Prince Louis Ferdinand, son of Crown Prince William of Prussia, and with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. John had already received clear indications from those he spoke to that there was no way of avoiding military defeat and unconditional surrender. Since November 1943, he had been in contact with the US military attaché in Madrid, Col. William Hohenthal, who was supposed to act as intermediary in establishing relations between the new government and the western Allies after a successful coup d'état, a plan presumably made in connection with the proposed attempt in November 1943. An example of the careless way information about the conspiracy was sometimes treated in the Goerdeler circle is that, on this occasion, John, with Goerdeler's express consent, told a Spanish friend and known Falangist all about it.<sup>95</sup>

However, John also managed to make contact with the British authorities in this way.<sup>96</sup> Dulles, who was at great pains to protect his 'Breakers' contacts against the British, also knew that they in turn got their information on the German resistance from Madrid and Lisbon, and rightly suspected that John, who was known to him by name, was behind it.<sup>97</sup> In January, John was instructed by Stauffenberg, whom he had not met before, to approach the British in Madrid in addition to his American contacts.<sup>98</sup> John again reported that the Allies were not prepared to come to an understanding, indeed he was able to name the precise date of the planned invasion.

John had made arrangements through his connections in Madrid and Lisbon for Stauffenberg to contact the western Allies without delay. Stauffenberg's plan was that discussions on an immediate end to the war should be conducted

<sup>94</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 174 (8 Aug. 1944).

<sup>95</sup> John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 26–8; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 294–5.

<sup>96</sup> John's British contacts are still not entirely clear but they were obviously closer than his connections with the Americans. John himself claims that his contacts with the British authorities were sabotaged by the Soviet agent Kim Philby, John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 37. Dulles too had learned that the Soviets were receiving information through British–German contacts in the Iberian peninsula: *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 3–116 (telegram 3327–33, 5 May 1944), 284. After 20 July 1944, the British protected John from arrest by the Spanish police, got him out to London via Lisbon, and employed him in radio propaganda—an operation closely connected with the secret service. John helped the British in their case against Manstein and in 1950, against American advice, they appointed him president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, James P. O'Donnell, 'Otto John: Idealist, Träumer, Überläufer', in *Die Welt*, 10 Nov. 1956, 19, IfZ, ZS A–29–II, 32; more recently, Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, 431; Stöver, 'Der Fall Otto John'.

<sup>97</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 506–7 (29 Nov. 1944); *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 2–133 (telegram 1888–89, 27 Jan. 1944), 206, and relevant note, 595.

<sup>98</sup> Stöver, 'Otto John', 167.

by the commanders-in-chief in person. Who was to act as 'commander-in-chief' on the German side remains an open question—Stauffenberg himself was not really a suitable candidate.<sup>99</sup> Goerdeler assumed, in the absence of information to the contrary,<sup>100</sup> that Stauffenberg was communicating through a contact in Sweden, and he expressed some annoyance at this further instance of Stauffenberg's interference in civil and political matters. John complained after the war that he was not responsible for giving Stauffenberg the idea that there was no longer any diplomatic room for manoeuvre. According to him, the leader of the military conspiracy had not been interested in his 'forecasts', only in his contacts in Allied circles.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, Stauffenberg was, as we have seen, much more realistic than Goerdeler in his assessment of the attitude the enemy might adopt, so it must be assumed that John's reports were not altogether without effect, supplemented as they were by Hofacker's unvarnished accounts of the operational prospects on the western front.

John worked throughout this period both for the secret service and for the resistance. Col. Hansen, head of what had been the Abwehr and was now the 'military section' of the RSHA, was a member of the conspiracy so, from John's point of view, there was not much difference between his two employers.<sup>102</sup> On 14 July 1944, Hansen called John back to Berlin, and he arrived there on 18 July. This move was obviously connected with the assassination attempts on 11 and 15 July. It is still not known why John was not left where he was to provide an urgently needed link—although he had been assured that 'any news or message our new high command may wish to convey to Eisenhower would be placed on his desk immediately'.<sup>103</sup> John was in Berlin on 20 July 1944, but he left the Bendlerblock before the revolt collapsed. According to the Gestapo, on the morning of 21 July he was still under the impression that the coup had succeeded.<sup>104</sup> Even so, he was able to escape to Spain before the investigators found out what his role had been.

In the course of the Gestapo investigations after 20 July, it was expressly assumed that Stauffenberg had 'established two links with the British side through intermediaries'.<sup>105</sup> It is not clear what form the other link is supposed to have taken. The conspirators close to Stauffenberg no longer had any illusions about the foreign policy outlook, yet another point on which they differed from Goerdeler and his circle.<sup>106</sup> But one of the immediate aims of the opposition was to end the war, which had become pointless and was

<sup>99</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 294; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 174–5 (8 Aug. 1944); John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 48.

<sup>100</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 247 (17 Aug. 1944). It is possible that Goerdeler wanted to protect John because he did not know he was safe; on the other hand, Goerdeler was otherwise very open with the Gestapo.

<sup>101</sup> John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 29.

<sup>102</sup> Buchheit, *Der deutsche Geheimdienst*, 429–37; Meyer, 'Staatsstreichplanung', 337; John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 41.

<sup>103</sup> John, *Falsch und zu spät*, 60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 59; *id.*, 'Am achten Jahrestag'.

<sup>105</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 126–7 (2 Aug. 1944).

<sup>106</sup> Heinemann, 'Illusionen', 1063–4; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 174 (8 Aug. 1944).

consequently criminal on that ground alone, as soon as possible, above all in the west, and prevent the Reich from being occupied by the Soviets. The necessary arrangements had been made, and the coup of 20 July 1944 was actually more successful in Paris, where all the conditions were ripe for an opening on the western front. Even an opportunity to establish immediate relations with the enemy appeared to have been secured.<sup>107</sup>

(c) *The Allied Assessment of the Resistance*

It is clear from the resistance attempts to establish relations with the western Allies that neither Dulles nor any other western forces had any serious influence on the German resistance. The west, in turn, was not prepared to call the cohesion of the wartime coalition into question for an enterprise that, from its point of view, was dubious on both personal and programmatic grounds.<sup>108</sup> This had nothing to do with 'their lack of flexibility, their hostility, their blindness';<sup>109</sup> it was based on a clear analysis of western interests in the light of the relatively sparse information available at the time.

In the first place, almost all the contacts established in Switzerland, Spain, and elsewhere were with men who were known to work for the Abwehr or—after it was taken over—for the Reich security main office. The Abwehr may have provided the resistance with facilities, resources, and the necessary false papers, but it was still the security service of the Third Reich. The western Allies could not be absolutely sure whether the Abwehr under Adm. Canaris was really the centre of a patriotic resistance movement, or whether it was merely playing a secret service game. The unclear conduct of a man who could be accused, even after the war, of having led a 'most inconsistent double life' was not calculated to dispel doubts about the credibility of his colleagues.<sup>110</sup> In some cases it was known what a dubious role they had played earlier. The BBC had critical comments to make, after 20 July 1944, about a conspiracy in which Count Helldorff had been involved,<sup>111</sup> and Dulles knew enough about Nebe—he described him to his superiors in Washington simply as a former Gestapo man.<sup>112</sup> It was difficult to draw the line. It was repeatedly noted that some members of the opposition were dangerously close to leading figures in the SS, witness Himmler's talks with Carl Langbehn and Johannes Popitz.<sup>113</sup> From the western Allies' point of view, some at least of the generals who were now ostensibly against Hitler were the very ones who had repeatedly announced a coup in 1939/40 and had then conducted campaigns of conquest for their Führer.<sup>114</sup> But it was not only the personalities that caused the

<sup>107</sup> *Der 20. Juli in Paris* gives a more recent overall assessment.

<sup>108</sup> Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, 200.

<sup>109</sup> See, to the same effect, Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 210.

<sup>110</sup> Höhne, 'Canaris und die Abwehr'; citation, Höhne, 'Admiral Wilhelm Canaris', 53.

<sup>111</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 4-42 (telegram 4305-7, 1 Aug. 1944), 354; Harrison, 'Alter Kämpfer', 385.

<sup>112</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 4-46 (telegram 4361, 5 Aug. 1944), 356.

<sup>113</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 448-9; Mauch, *The Shadow War*, 115.

<sup>114</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 214.

Allies to proceed with caution; it was also their political agenda. The OSS research and analysis section's investigations may have been one-sided, but the fact remained that, until shortly before the revolt, the German opposition had repeatedly attempted to spare Germany from some at least of the consequences of the war it had started, and to sanction its pre-war territorial gains and even its wartime conquests.<sup>115</sup> If—like Marcuse—one regarded fascism as a logical consequence of large-scale capitalism on the Weimar model, the rise of the bourgeoisie, and militarism, then it made very little sense to reinstate the very forces that had originally helped Hitler to gain power.<sup>116</sup> The opposition 'consisted of "bankrupt generals, intellectuals with a nationalist bent, and (possibly) nationalistic Social Democrats and bureaucrats"'.<sup>117</sup> Another study, rather less close to the event, assessed the 20 July 1944 revolt as follows: 'One source described the men who planned the revolt as "yesterday's men". Certainly most of them were upright and respectable men. But neither the world nor Germany itself would have found them to be imbued with a truly democratic spirit.'<sup>118</sup>

German national-conservative resistance was out on a limb, both at home and abroad. Its failure was attributable not only to a lack of broad popular support in Germany. Hitler's opponents were equally isolated abroad, despite all efforts to present their position in a positive light. Efforts on both fronts suffered from a further serious constraint: so long as it had nothing to offer the German people but unconditional surrender, the opposition could not hope to win general approval.<sup>119</sup> Conversely, its social and political isolation and exclusiveness at home meant that it was perceived abroad in the negative light that we have described. Given the massive repression imposed by the Nazi system and the extremely limited opportunities for communication with the outside world, there was little chance of resolving this dilemma.

### 3. EAST OR WEST?

There did nevertheless appear to be one way out. If the west was so unapproachable, why not turn to Stalin and the Soviet Union instead and seek to make peace with them on tolerable terms?<sup>120</sup> It seems that the idea of seeking a solution in the east rather than the west was in fact seriously considered. One important consideration was that, at least so long as there was no western front (at least, in other words, until June 1944), any attempt to enter into separate negotiations with a view to ending the war in the west would inevitably be

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 281, with a report on a visit to Stockholm made by Trott in late June/early July 1944; Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 482.

<sup>116</sup> Mauch, 'Subversive Kriegführung', 52, 60.

<sup>117</sup> Heideking, 'Die "Breakers-Akte"', 30–1.

<sup>118</sup> Full US military government secret service report on the hearings in connection with 20 July, reproduced in *USA und deutscher Widerstand*, doc. 49, 140–1.

<sup>119</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 26 (report by Gotthard von Falkenhausen).

<sup>120</sup> Ueberschär, 'Zum "Rußlandbild"', 79.



seen by the troops on the eastern front as a stab in the back.<sup>121</sup> In the spring of 1943, Heusinger in the army high command thought there was more chance of reaching an understanding with the Soviet Union than with England, and Trott was inclined to agree.<sup>122</sup> Fellgiebel was of the same opinion at the time, whereas Stauffenberg was in favour of proceeding with caution, pending clarification of the aims of the National Committee for a 'Free Germany'.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, Bormann's suggestion that the conspirators collaborated with the National Committee was either a myth or a malicious slander, especially as even the Soviet policy-makers did not necessarily regard the National Committee as the nucleus of a future German government.<sup>124</sup>

Subsequently, in the light of Soviet military successes, the German resistance lost interest in seeking a separate peace in the east. The apparent contradiction is resolved if one remembers that there was now no question of avoiding the occupation of the Reich. Realistically, the only hope was that a separate end to hostilities in the west would leave a larger part of Germany in the hands of the western Allies, in other words that the Americans and the British would get to Berlin before the Russians.<sup>125</sup> Trott's contacts with the outside world were now increasingly determined by the rapid approach of the Red Army.<sup>126</sup>

Most of the conspirators on the eastern front too were convinced in the summer of 1944 that the war in the west must be ended as quickly as possible. However, Tresckow seems to have realized even earlier than the Goerdeler group that, once that happened, it would become impossible to continue the war on either front. At all events, there is no record of Tresckow ever mentioning the idea, widely discussed elsewhere, of transferring the army in the west to the eastern front. It may simply be that he was in a better position than the civilians in Berlin to know all about the catastrophic situation in the east, but it may also be that he had a deeper moral horror of the crimes the regime had committed in Russia, which he himself had witnessed at first hand.<sup>127</sup>

Apart from the highly unreliable Gisevius, there is another, reliable, witness to the fact that Stauffenberg and his close associate Leber were thinking of turning to the east in the period immediately before 20 July 1944, namely Maj. Kuhn of the general staff, who had defected to the Soviet side.<sup>128</sup> However, any critical examination of Kuhn's statements cannot fail to note that they were made at a time when he was a prisoner of war and must have had an interest in presenting the conspiracy as being pro-Soviet. He must have been

<sup>121</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 18.

<sup>122</sup> Wegner, 'Choreographie', 494-5; Sonnenhol, 'Untergang', 109.

<sup>123</sup> Statement by Kuhn on 2 Sept. 1944, in Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 383.

<sup>124</sup> Circular No. 4, Bormann, Führer headquarters, to all Gauleiters (Most urgent—immediate delivery), 20 July 1944, IfZ, Fa 116, fo. 1; Bungert, 'Ein meisterhafter Schachzug', 107-8.

<sup>125</sup> See for example, to this effect, Wagner and Lindemann, in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 90-1 (28 July 1944), and Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 236.

<sup>126</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 279.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 316; Scheurig, *Henning von Tresckow*, III.

<sup>128</sup> Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 448-53; Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 383.



aware that the Stalinist officers interrogating him would inevitably—like the American secret service—regard the revolt of 20 July 1944 as an incident in an internecine feud between reactionary and fascist factions.<sup>129</sup>

It is apparent from Stauffenberg's remarks to Leber and Otto John, and also from the conference in Berlin-Wannsee on 16 July 1944, that he was primarily seeking ways to end the war in the west but that he also wanted to establish relations with the Soviet Union. Whenever Stauffenberg mentioned the national uprising of 1813 as a precedent for his proposed coup d'état, as he often did, he was thinking of the independent step taken by Gen. Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, who laid the foundations for the 1813 uprising by reaching an understanding with Russia in the 1812 Tauroggen Convention. Stauffenberg ultimately regarded this foreign policy objective as secondary. Although he pressed for negotiations to be conducted by the commanders-in-chief in person, the contacts in the east were to be arranged through the former German ambassador in Moscow, Friedrich Werner Graf von der Schulenburg. Stauffenberg did not devote anything like so much energy to these arrangements as he did to his contacts with the western Allies.<sup>130</sup>

The differences between Goerdeler and Stauffenberg, however acute they may have become in the final phase of the conspiracy, did not arise primarily from disputes about foreign policy, which merely reflected their views on domestic policy. Here, Stauffenberg too clearly preferred a western solution. However, unlike Goerdeler, he did not flatly refuse to have any contact with the Soviet Union under Stalin, just as he had sought to establish contact through Leber and Reichwein with the Communists who had remained in the Reich. Nevertheless, specific preparations for a speedy end to hostilities had been made not in the east but in France, where—it was thought—there were two senior commanders, Field Marshals von Kluge and Rommel, who would take the conspirators' side when the decisive moment came, and would use their influence to bring about a swift end to the war in the west.<sup>131</sup>

#### 4. ROMMEL, KLUGE, AND THE RESISTANCE

The possibility of ending the war in the west separately had—as we have shown—been discussed earlier but had soon been rejected on fundamental grounds.<sup>132</sup> One important consideration was that the resistance groups were not in a position to give the German public any assurance from the west that the demand for unconditional surrender would be withdrawn in return for considerable military concessions.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> On the Soviet perception of the national-conservative resistance, see Boroznjak, 'Widerstand'. Hoffmann, 'Tresckow und Stauffenberg', 8, neglects this aspect in his critical review of the sources.

<sup>130</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 101–2 (30 July 1944), 110 (31 July 1944); Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg*, 286; Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 410–11, 441; Schramm, *Aufstand*, 19.

<sup>131</sup> See also Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 296–7.

<sup>132</sup> IFZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, fo. 51.

<sup>133</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 25–6.

The rebel cell attached to the military commander in France, Gen. Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, and Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker had nevertheless made arrangements to take control in Paris on the day of the planned coup and, in particular, to secure and disarm members of the Waffen-SS, the Gestapo, and the SD. The commander-in-chief West would thus be able to take measures to end the war without any interference from elements loyal to the regime. That in turn meant asking the western Allies for at least such concessions as would allow an orderly withdrawal from France, concessions that would include suspension of air attacks on troop movements, the 'orderly transfer of the administration of the occupied western territories to American and British bodies (not Gaullists)', and 'strict observance of the terms of the Geneva Convention in the western territories'.<sup>134</sup> This was rather different from the illusions about the future status of Alsace-Lorraine that were still nourished in Berlin at the time, i.e. in the summer of 1944. Contact had also been established with the French resistance with a view to 'persuading it to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the new German government' in the event of a coup d'état.<sup>135</sup>

A peculiar situation arose in the west when the staff of Army Group B in Italy was moved to France in November 1943. Responsibility for repelling the impending invasion was transferred—in a series of stages—to the commander-in-chief of the group, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the field marshal then most closely identified in the public mind with National Socialism.<sup>136</sup> Rommel had by now privately abandoned his earlier position of uncritical admiration for his 'leader' (and supporter). Hitler's intervention in the command of the panzer army in Africa during the battle of El Alamein had—as we have seen—first alerted Rommel to the fact that he was dealing with a rank amateur.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless the man who had once been regarded as 'the Führer's general'<sup>138</sup> had not yet finally and openly broken with Hitler. On the contrary, he fell under his spell again every time they met.

Rommel had, however, spoken of his doubts when he was among friends. He knew that the war could not now be won, and Hitler had also confided to him that the Allies would never make peace with him,<sup>139</sup> so he was clearly in a dilemma. Rommel was even harder on the leading figures surrounding Hitler than he was on Hitler himself. His memoirs are deeply critical of Göring, in particular, and the Luftwaffe which—under the command of his long-time rival Field Marshal Kesselring—he felt had let him down in Africa.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> IfZ, ED 88/1, coll. Zeller, fos. 51–2.

<sup>135</sup> Note by Dr Teuchert in Schramm, *Aufstand*, 20–1.

<sup>136</sup> On Rommel, see the recent study by Remy, *Mythos Rommel*. Irving, *Trail of the Fox* remains unsurpassed in respect of its wealth of detail—despite some misrepresentations. On Rommel's role in the resistance, see also Stumpf, 'Erwin Rommel'.

<sup>137</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vi. 789.

<sup>138</sup> This is the subtitle of a new biography of Rommel, Reuth, *Rommel*—which in fact contains little new material.

<sup>139</sup> Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 307.

<sup>140</sup> Remy, *Mythos Rommel*, 170.

As Goerdeler was in favour of ending the war in the west separately and—if possible—without an assassination, he had to try and win a highly distinguished and extremely popular army commander over to his cause. Goerdeler had obtained a post with the firm of Robert Bosch in Stuttgart which allowed him to travel, so he took the opportunity to start his campaign, knowing that Rommel was a native Swabian. In his capacity as former mayor of Leipzig, Goerdeler first approached the mayor of Stuttgart, Karl Strölin, a keen National Socialist, who proved to be perfectly willing to set up a meeting with the ‘Desert Fox’.<sup>141</sup> In December 1943 he passed to Rommel, through his wife, a memorandum of Goerdeler’s drawing his attention—possibly for the first time—to the crimes committed by the regime in the east. In February 1944, Strölin himself met Rommel at his house in Herrlingen, near Ulm.<sup>142</sup>

The attempts to recruit Rommel through Strölin were confined exclusively to the Goerdeler circle. So it is hardly surprising that there was no talk of assassination or the details of VALKYRIE. As usual with Goerdeler, it was a matter of identifying like-minded people in responsible positions who could be approached once the military men in Berlin had ‘lit the fuse’. It is therefore quite wrong to suppose that Rommel could have offered his services to a ‘conspiracy’ in any shape or form at this stage.<sup>143</sup>

The initial talks between Rommel and Stülpnagel are a different matter, however. The conversation with the military commander in France, who was not Rommel’s subordinate, took place at a christening at Mareil-Marly in mid-May 1944, in other words just before the invasion, and historians vary in their accounts of what transpired.<sup>144</sup> It is questionable whether it really amounted to a ‘Rommel–Stülpnagel concept for a “solution in the west”’. There appear to be grounds for supposing that Stülpnagel spoke to Rommel only in very vague terms, especially since, as already mentioned, Stauffenberg insisted on doing all recruiting himself at this stage. It is certainly not the case that Rommel was completely on the conspirators’ side from this point on. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence that, after this meeting, Rommel’s thoughts turned increasingly to the possibility of ending the war in the west.

The new chief of the general staff in Army Group B, Lt.-Gen. Hans Speidel, who took up his duties in the army group’s headquarters at La Roche-Guyon in mid-April 1944, had an important role in this connection.<sup>145</sup> Speidel, who had previously served on the eastern front, confirmed his new C-in-C’s doubts about the possibility of a favourable outcome to the war. It seems that, up to

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 229. Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 82; a different account is given in Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 344–5.

<sup>142</sup> Scholtysseck, *Robert Bosch*, 476.

<sup>143</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 433; for a different account, see Strölin, *Verräter oder Patrioten?*, 32–3; also, probably based on the latter, Ose, ‘Erwin Rommel’, 263.

<sup>144</sup> Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 84; Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 367; Schramm, *Aufstand*, 32–5, quotation at 34.

<sup>145</sup> There is no archive material on Rommel’s attitude to the resistance; even the documents in *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung* contain few mentions of him and do not record any connection

this point, Rommel too may still have had some illusions about the situation in the east. On the other hand, Speidel was not party to the military conspiracy that had been taking shape in Berlin since the autumn of 1943. He was one of Goerdeler's distant confidants in France, but he had no close links with Stauffenberg.<sup>146</sup> His statements about the plans Rommel is supposed to have had for action against Hitler show the influence of Goerdeler's ideas, even down to his choice of words. 'When Rommel and Strölin first discussed revolutionary change, they talked mainly about possible legal procedures—arresting Hitler and trying him before a German court'<sup>147</sup>—although it must remain an open question how such steps could be regarded as 'legal'. Speidel's earlier statement that Rommel planned 'to use reliable Panzer formations to seize the person of Hitler, so that he could be brought before a German court and tried for crimes against the German people and humanity'<sup>148</sup> appears to lack credibility. It must have been clear to a sensible soldier like Rommel that such a plan was not feasible from a military point of view.<sup>149</sup> All that the reports from May 1944 say is that Rommel thought it was time to bring the war to a speedy conclusion.<sup>150</sup> At the beginning of July 1944 he was still convinced of the need to end the war, but he was not prepared to act independently against Hitler.

This attitude probably began to change with the realization that the invasion was succeeding, and after Hitler's visit to the western front on 17 June 1944. The battle for northern France was now at its height, and the legendary marshal complained at length to Ruge that Hitler allowed him too little freedom of action: 'Now heavy reproaches, before that meddling in every trivial detail.' He expanded on his concerns about the outcome of the war, and spoke of the crimes committed by Germans as an obstacle to ending it: 'Top brass not decent, greatly to blame for slaughter. Amateurish conduct of war.'<sup>151</sup> Within a very small circle, in a bunker near Margival, he boldly stood up to Hitler,

with the resistance. We therefore rely on statements from the members of Rommel's circle who survived, notably Speidel and the naval liaison officer Vice-Adm. Friedrich Ruge, who have interests of their own. There are interesting differences, which cannot be gone into here, between the accounts given in Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, and Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*. On the differences between Ruge's original diary and the version published in book form, see David Irving's confidential note of 21 Sept. 1975 to the IfZ, IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), excerpt from Ruge's diary.

<sup>146</sup> On Speidel's role in Paris, see also Krautkrämer, 'Hans Speidel', in particular 246, 250, and Range, *Generale und Admirale*, 33.

<sup>147</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 169.

<sup>148</sup> Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 84–5; see also, to the same effect, Ritter, *Goerdeler*, 400.

<sup>149</sup> The suggestion in Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 386–7, that Speidel and other 'members of the resistance' sabotaged the defence against the invasion appears to be contrived and mistaken; the literature on the battles in Normandy presents quite different reasons why the two divisions in question were not deployed for some time, see for example Ose, *Entscheidung im Westen*, 111–13; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 593–6; see also, more recently, Mönch, *Entscheidungsschlacht*, ch. VIII, which is unfortunately couched in very vague terms.

<sup>150</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 34, on the first conversation between Stülpnagel and Speidel: 'On that 20 April, Speidel could not yet say any further'; Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 401.

<sup>151</sup> IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit, excerpt from Ruge's diary, 11 June 1944, on Hitler's micro-management, similar entry on 3 July 1944).

drawing the Führer's attention to the diplomatic isolation of the Reich and the desperate situation on all fronts. Hitler responded with the usual reprimand reserved for his field marshals: 'Don't bother about the progress of the war. Concentrate on the invasion!'<sup>152</sup> The 'Desert Fox' met his 'leader' for the last time on 28 June 1944—at the Berghof in Berchtesgaden, in company with the OB West, Rundstedt. Rommel again expressed his reservations about the conduct of the war and, as Hitler refused to see either or both in private, he did so in a larger gathering. This brought another rebuff: he was told to mind his own business.<sup>153</sup> Immediately after this address to Hitler, Rundstedt was dismissed.

The specifically German appellation 'field marshal general' was originally a title, not a rank, awarded in most cases for winning a battle or capturing a fortress, and it was a title for life: a field marshal did not retire. He was the plenipotentiary representing the sovereign in a theatre of war. Under Hitler, however, it became a 'matter of course': field marshal was simply the fifth rank of general, normally awarded when an officer took command of an army group, and it was not unusual for one field marshal to be subordinate to another. Rommel—even when he was a field marshal—had always been subordinate, first to the Italians, then to Kesselring, and later—in France—to Rundstedt. He hoped that, with the dismissal of Rundstedt, he might at least become OB West and be in a position to act on his own initiative, but that hope was dashed when Hitler appointed Kluge instead, leaving Rommel under his command.<sup>154</sup> Rommel now began to live up to his exalted rank. In addressing the question of a political solution to the war, he was, as a Swabian, quite at home with the Prussian-German military tradition, and he must have found Hitler's efforts to reduce him to an executive organ of his own personal political (and even operational military) decisions insulting.

On 9 July 1944, Rommel received a visit from the son of his divisional commander in the First World War, Lt.-Col. Cäsar von Hofacker. Hofacker did not merely want to chat about experiences in the war. He had something else in mind: a first attempt on the part of the military conspiracy to establish contact between his cousin Stauffenberg and the commander-in-chief on the invasion front. Hofacker certainly visited Rommel in order to obtain information about the military outlook in Normandy which he could then pass on to Stauffenberg in person. As a member of the military commander's staff, responsible for keeping heads of section in the military administration informed of the military situation, Hofacker could ask such questions without arousing suspicion.<sup>155</sup> Opinions differ as to how much Hofacker told Rommel about the conspiracy, and how far Rommel, disillusioned as he was, agreed to join in.<sup>156</sup> According to

<sup>152</sup> Quoted in Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 181; see also Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 404.

<sup>153</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 182–3; Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 415; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 598.

<sup>154</sup> On the disagreements between Rommel and Kluge, see Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 419–20, and Thun-Hohenstein, 'Generalfeldmarschall Günther von Kluge', 47.

<sup>155</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 84.

<sup>156</sup> Müller, *Oberst i.G. Stauffenberg*, 433–4; Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 122–4.

a senior civil servant, Friedrich von Teuchert, employed like Hofacker on the military commander's staff, Rommel 'instructed Hofacker . . . to draft a letter to the . . . commander-in-chief in the west (Montgomery) offering surrender on honourable terms'. A letter to that effect was written but was never sent.<sup>157</sup>

Hofacker reported in very positive terms on Rommel's readiness to offer his services in the event of a coup. There is still some doubt as to whether the assassination plan was also discussed.<sup>158</sup> In view of the covert nature of the military conspirators' activities and Stauffenberg's tendency to keep things to himself (a tendency that even Hofacker complained about), it is more likely that Rommel was one of the large circle of people who were on the margins of the conspiracy but were never full-blown members.<sup>159</sup> The fact that Lt.-Gen. von Hase told his wife that Rommel, Kluge, and Witzleben were members of the conspiracy and that the military district commander, Kortzfleisch, was in the opposition camp<sup>160</sup> gives some idea of the size of that group. Of the four he named, Witzleben was, at most, generally aware of the actual plans and Stauffenberg's assassination plan, Kluge and Rommel were generally aware that there were groups opposed to the regime, and Kortzfleisch stood firmly on the side of the regime on 20 July 1944.

However, it is not true to say that the talks left Rommel 'unchanged and unimpressed'.<sup>161</sup> Hofacker's delight over Rommel's attitude was by no means unjustified. Rommel had told Ruge on 2 July 1944 that it was about time 'the politicians did something'.<sup>162</sup> Whatever Hofacker may or may not have told the field marshal about the opposition within Germany and the political situation, Rommel had a private meeting on the morning after their talk (i.e. on 10 July) with Col. Hans Lattmann, whom he had got to know in Africa. Rommel confided to him: 'I mean to try, on the basis of my reputation with the Allies, to enter into a pact with the west against Hitler's wishes, provided that they will allow us to march side by side with them against Russia.'<sup>163</sup> That

<sup>157</sup> Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 13, IfZ, MS 200/85; Bargatzky, *Hotel Majestic*, 129–30.

<sup>158</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Cäsar von Hofacker', 85–6. 'There is understandably no record of the important conversation between Rommel and Hofacker on 9 July. The best source is an oral report which Hofacker gave to his friend Freiherr von Falkenhausen that evening and which Falkenhausen wrote down, albeit only a year later.' According to that report, Hofacker mentioned the assassination; there is however no other evidence for this; report by Gotthard von Falkenhausen on events in Paris on 20 July, IfZ, ED 88/1, fos. 36–68; Schramm, *Aufstand*, 56, gives only a second-hand account; statement by Bargatzky in Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 20, IfZ, MS 200/85, with no indication as to whether the assassination was mentioned.

<sup>159</sup> Falkenhausen later spoke in much more restrained terms: 'In the evening after this conversation, he [Hofacker] reported to me, and I certainly understood from his report, that Rommel did not want to revolt immediately but that he was prepared to lead the resistance if Hitler did not give way.' Statement by Falkenhausen in Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 14, IfZ, MS 200/85.

<sup>160</sup> Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 213.

<sup>162</sup> IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), excerpt from Ruge's diary, 2 July 1944.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Oberst Hans Lattmann in the presence of his wife, Tübingen, 15 June 1975, IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), interviews and interrogation of witnesses. According to his

<sup>161</sup> Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 425.



was the first time Rommel did not talk about 'the politicians' but about taking action himself against Hitler, and there were more indications to the same effect in the days that followed. On 15 July, he told another old friend from the African campaign, Lt.-Col. Elmar Warning, that he and Kluge had presented Hitler with an 'ultimatum'. When Warning asked what would happen if the Führer refused to accept it, Rommel said: 'Then I shall open the door on the western front, because there is only one more important decision to be made, namely to ensure that the British and the Americans get to Berlin before the Russians!'<sup>164</sup> Rommel's son Manfred recalls that his father also spoke to SS-Obergruppenführer and Waffen-SS Gen. Sepp Dietrich, who was in charge of I Panzer Corps under his overall command, and asked him whose side he would be on, his or the Führer's, if the army surrendered in the west, and that Dietrich had said: 'Yours'.<sup>165</sup> All these contacts were extremely risky, but they do not prove that Rommel knew that the conspirators in the Reich intended to end the war by assassination and a coup d'état.<sup>166</sup>

When he spoke of an 'ultimatum', Rommel was referring to a memorandum dispatched on 15 July in which he made the following demand: 'The troops are fighting heroically everywhere, but the odds are against them and the battle is nearing its end. In my view, the necessary conclusions must be drawn from this situation. I feel it is my duty, as commander-in-chief of the army group, to make this clear.'<sup>167</sup> This memorandum merely repeats what Rommel had already told Hitler in private conversation on at least two occasions. The fact that he now put it in writing must have been seen as a move in the bitter struggle for power. Had Hitler permitted such blatant poaching on his jealously guarded political preserves to pass without comment, it would have signified a substantial loss of authority.

Whether Rommel really intended, if necessary, to act against Hitler (and whether Hitler would have allowed him to do so, or would have dismissed him) must remain open questions. The fact is that Rommel spoke with a number of officers in order to satisfy himself that the troops would remain loyal in the event of a separate end to the war. Radio contact had also been established

own account, Irving expressly asked again about the date, which Lattmann confidently confirmed. However, in his book (*Trail of the Fox*, 433), Irving places this conversation in a much later context.

<sup>164</sup> Record of a conversation with Dr Elmar Warning, Munich, 11 Dec. 1976, IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), interviews and interrogation of witnesses.

<sup>165</sup> Notes on second interview with Herr Oberbürgermeister Manfred Rommel, Stuttgart, 7 June 1975, IfZ, ED 100/188 (Irving deposit), interviews and interrogation of witnesses; on a similar conversation with SS-Obergruppenführer and Waffen-SS Gen. Meyer, see 'Auswirkungen', 307.

<sup>166</sup> The Gestapo assumed in October 1944 that Rommel was aware of the assassination plans: Rommel, 'Tod', and Rommel, 'Rommels Tod' (text of two statements made on oath in 1945). In *We Defended Normandy*, 84, Speidel held that that was in fact the case, but in his more recent work, *Aus unserer Zeit*, he no longer takes that position. There is no evidence that Rommel knew of an impending assassination.

<sup>167</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 187; BA-MA RH 19 IX/8, fos. 97–9; Ose, *Entscheidung im Westen*, 322–4.



between US headquarters and Army Group B, to arrange an exchange of American nurses who had been captured by the Germans.<sup>168</sup>

When Rommel was forced to drop out as a result of serious injuries incurred in an attack by low-flying aircraft on 17 July 1944, it did not really affect Stauffenberg's plan of action. But it dealt a severe blow to the plans, which had not been agreed with Stauffenberg, to end hostilities in the west. The conspiracy in the west was essentially still able to function, despite Rommel's injuries, as the events in Paris on 20 July showed. But there was now no one with the necessary courage and determination to put Rommel's plans into effect. In the midst of these events, who should step into the breach but the man Hitler had just appointed 'right under Rommel's nose', the man who, as C-in-C of Army Group Centre, had allowed the most important group of military conspirators to pursue their activities on his staff until 1943,<sup>169</sup> Field Marshal Hans Günther von Kluge.<sup>170</sup> Kluge had once gone so far as to say, under pressure from Tresckow, then his operations officer, 'Children, I'm with you!',<sup>171</sup> but even then he had soon recanted.<sup>172</sup> After a serious car accident, he was put on the reserve list and had no further contact with the conspirators. It was tacitly assumed in Berlin that Kluge would not oppose a change of regime—provided Hitler was dead and the coup was successful.

Just how far Speidel was from the centre of the conspiracy became apparent on 20 July. The conspirators in Paris, in the group round Stülpnagel and Hofacker, had already been alerted the day before and had been able to make the necessary preparations. Col. Finckh of the general staff received an anonymous phone call just after midday, informing him that the assassination had been carried out—Speidel heard the news, through Finckh and Gen. Günther Blumentritt, only at about 1700h.<sup>173</sup> Stülpnagel made good use of the intervening period. As night fell, all forces in Paris that might serve to stabilize the system, notably the senior SS and police commandant Karl Albrecht Oberg and his staff, were taken into custody and locked up in the Wehrmacht prison at Fresnes, where the sandbags were stacked all ready for executions by firing squad.<sup>174</sup> All the preparations had been made. Nothing and nobody could now prevent Kluge, who returned from a visit to the front between 1800h and 1900h, from contacting the Americans and the British, or from opening up or pulling back the front.

Kluge had now received two pieces of news: the message, conveyed through military channels from the Bendlerstraße, that Hitler was dead, and the radio

<sup>168</sup> Irving, *Trail of the Fox*, 420–1; Speidel, *We Defended Normandy*, 123–4; Schramm, *Aufstand*, 53.

<sup>169</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Wehrmacht und Widerstand', 104–5; Schlabrendorff, *Secret War*.

<sup>170</sup> On Kluge, see in addition to the sources already mentioned: Graeger, 'Günther von Kluge'; Steinbach, 'Von Kluge'; and Lamb, 'Kluge'.

<sup>171</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg und seine Brüder*, 308 (not in English).

<sup>172</sup> Characteristic of Kluge's ambivalent attitude: Mühleisen, 'Patrioten', 451.

<sup>173</sup> Schramm, *Aufstand*, 68, 77, 80; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 561; Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 189.

<sup>174</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 190–1; Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 566–7.

announcements that the Führer had survived an attempt on his life. Kluge used his connections to make further enquiries. He did not yield to the pressure from Col.-Gen. Beck, who rang from Berlin urging him to act as though Hitler were dead. On the contrary, he managed to reach Maj.-Gen. Stieff in Rastenburg, who knew from the reports of his subordinate, Maj. Ernst Ferber, and could confirm that Hitler had survived. As far as Kluge was concerned, that was the end of the matter and, when Stülpnagel besought him to seize the unique opportunity presented by what amounted to a *fait accompli* in Paris, the OB West distanced himself from the actions of his subordinate Wehrmacht commander and ordered him to find some way of quietly disappearing. All Kluge offered by way of excuse was: 'Well, if the swine was dead . . . but as things are . . .'<sup>175</sup> It would have taken a different commander, a commander capable of great personal resolve, to decide in this situation to end the war on his own initiative—and against Hitler's orders. But it was no doubt true that, as Kluge himself confided to his former intelligence officer a few days later: 'Gersdorff, Field Marshal von Kluge is not a great man.'<sup>176</sup>

Whether Rommel would have acted as resolutely as he intended to do if Hitler survived, and whether he could have acted independently of Kluge as OB West, must remain open questions. The decisive fact is that Kluge was not prepared to act against Hitler's orders while Hitler was still alive. Once again Stauffenberg was shown to have been right to assume that the tyrant must die if the attempted coup was to be successful. If a commander-in-chief like Kluge, who was aware of the conspiracy and suspected that his role was bound to become known, refused to support a coup while Hitler was still alive, officers who were not in the conspiracy could certainly not be relied upon to do so.

The investigators did in fact learn that Kluge had been party to the conspiracy in the staff of Army Group Centre.<sup>177</sup> In the middle of August 1944, Kluge was at the front at Falaise, and Hitler was unable to reach him for a whole day because his radio car had broken down. Hitler promptly gave orders that Model was to replace him and four days later, to Kluge's surprise, Model arrived unannounced at the theatre of operations and took command. Hitler clearly thought Kluge might do now what he had been unable to bring himself to do on 20 July, namely negotiate a partial surrender with the Allies.<sup>178</sup> Kluge feared, not without cause, that his relationship with the resistance group on the eastern front was one of the reasons for his dismissal. He guessed that he would be called to account for it, and committed suicide on the way to Berlin.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 17, IfZ, MS 200/85; Gisevius, *Bis zum bitteren Ende*, 557; Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 189–90.

<sup>176</sup> Statement by Gersdorff in Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 21–2, IfZ, MS 200/85; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 151.

<sup>177</sup> Bormann file note for Pg. Friedrich, 17 Aug. 1944, IfZ, Fa 116, fos. 35–8.

<sup>178</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 617; Steinbach, 'Von Kluge', 319; Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 198–9.

<sup>179</sup> Thun-Hohenstein, 'Generalfeldmarschall Günther von Kluge', 50.

Speidel was dismissed on 4 September and arrested on 7 September. In view of the speed with which the Gestapo had rounded up the group of conspirators in France (Stülpnagel had already been executed at this point), this again shows how far Speidel was from the centre of events.<sup>180</sup> On 14 October, Rommel was forced to commit suicide.<sup>181</sup> A first mention of his connections with the conspirators, a few days after 20 July, was marked 'incorrect' in the Gestapo reports.<sup>182</sup> Clearly the investigating officer concluded only at a relatively late stage in the proceedings that Rommel had after all been more deeply involved in the conspiracy than had originally been supposed. It is more or less impossible to determine now whether this conclusion was based on evidence obtained under interrogation from Speidel, who had visited his commander-in-chief at his home in Herrlingen during his long convalescence.<sup>183</sup> The funeral oration, delivered by the unsuspecting Rundstedt at the state ceremony to mark the passing of Hitler's most popular general, closed with the ringing phrase: 'His heart belonged to the Führer.' In fact, Rommel had been murdered on orders from said Führer. The 'Desert Fox' had not belonged to Stauffenberg's military resistance organization, he had merely been on the margins of Goerdeler's group. His fate was probably sealed by his memorandum of 15 July 1944 urging Hitler to end the war.

The military conspirators did manage to make meticulous preparations for the coup in Paris. There, where it was most important to the key objective of ending the war, the military takeover went more smoothly than it did anywhere else. But, with Hitler's survival, the revolt was doomed to failure in France as well. The necessary resources for a perfect coup might be available in Paris—but the success of the conspiracy in France depended, for good or ill, on the success of the assassination attempt and the conspiracy in the Reich.

<sup>180</sup> Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit*, 209, 213–14; Krautkrämer, 'Hans Speidel', 249.

<sup>181</sup> Rommel, 'Tod', and Rommel, 'Rommels Tod'.

<sup>182</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 101 (30 July 1944).

<sup>183</sup> This is the basic theory in Irving, *Trail of the Fox*.

## VIII. Resistance Activities Unconnected with 20 July 1944

FOR the purposes of this study, 'resistance' has been understood to mean activities designed to overthrow the Nazi regime under wartime conditions, and other forms of resistance have not so far been considered. However, the failure of the attempted coup on 20 July and the increased repression that followed made it very difficult in German wartime society to pursue any opposition activities that might be classified as 'resistance'. An account of the repercussions of purely military resistance activities must therefore also consider the ways in which the failure of the efforts of Beck, Goerdeler, Stauffenberg, and their associates affected the activities of other opposition groups.

Dissent took widely varying forms. As with the national-conservative resistance examined earlier, here too the lines between action within the parameters of the system, partial opposition, and radical resistance are fluid. And here too, we do not really know what caused those concerned to act as they did.

### I. RESCUERS IN UNIFORM

Even before 20 July 1944, there were some exceptions to the rule in the ranks of the Wehrmacht. Attention is drawn particularly in this connection to the members of the armed forces who acquired merit by rescuing actual or potential victims of persecution, notably in the war of extermination in the east.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that such action had, of necessity, to be taken in isolation, without support from friends or comrades, since 'comradeship' had degenerated under the pressure of Nazi ideological indoctrination into a mere tool for enforcing conformity. Without the closed social milieu that we have described, and the opportunities for covert recruitment it afforded, it was clearly much too risky to look for allies.<sup>2</sup>

#### (a) *Wilm Hosenfeld*

The rescuers include, first and foremost, the businessman Oskar Schindler on the civilian side, but two members of the Wehrmacht also deserve special mention. The first, reserve Capt. Wilm Hosenfeld, born 1895, who had served in the First World War, is known to a fairly wide public as the rescuer of the Polish-Jewish pianist, Władysław Szpilman. This particular action was just one of many taken by Hosenfeld, as a member of the German forces occupying Warsaw, to help members of the Jewish community and the Polish intelligentsia. In letters to his wife in 1944, in his diaries and other papers, we read

<sup>1</sup> On this complex, see, inter alia, the collection of studies *Retter in Uniform*.

<sup>2</sup> Wette, 'Helfer und Retter', 12-13; Kühne, 'Der Judenretter', 33.

of Jews who were equipped with false papers and employed by Hosenfeld at the sports ground in Warsaw, women suspected of being partisans who were brought before Hosenfeld, as acting intelligence officer, and let off.<sup>3</sup> Hosenfeld, who repeatedly witnessed deportations and mass murders, was clearly motivated by his strict Catholic upbringing and attitude to life. Hosenfeld's extensive and protracted activities can hardly have failed to attract attention in his immediate vicinity, but nothing happened to him during the period of Nazi rule. However, he fell into Soviet hands, was sentenced at Minsk to twenty-five years' imprisonment, and died in a prisoner-of-war camp in 1952.

(b) *Anton Schmid*

A different fate befell the Austrian sergeant Anton Schmid. He was in charge of an assembly point for stragglers at Vilnius in Lithuania in the winter of 1941/2, and took the opportunities afforded by his position there to help Jews to escape from the ghetto. Comparatively little is known of Schmid. It is not even certain whether his actions were prompted by his Catholic faith, common humanity, or political conviction. A letter to his wife, written after his arrest, suggests that his motives were personal.<sup>4</sup> Schmid worked closely in Vilnius with the local leader of the armed Jewish resistance, Mordechai Tenenbaum.<sup>5</sup> It is impossible to determine now the actual extent to which, by arranging for Jews to be transported from Vilnius to other—initially less dangerous—ghettos, he knowingly or unknowingly assisted the armed struggle behind the German lines.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, the German authorities took a very serious view of his activities, with the result that he was court-martialled, sentenced to death, and shot in Vilnius on 13 April 1942.

Schmid, like Hosenfeld, risked his life for humanitarian reasons. He was not trying to alter the criminal system: his position in the Wehrmacht hierarchy was far too low for that. The efforts of both men proved in the end to have been largely in vain. Many of those initially rescued subsequently fell victim to persecution in other ghettos or lost their lives in the war with the partisans.<sup>7</sup> With all due respect to the humane efforts of the very few (possibly about 100)<sup>8</sup> who, each in his own area of responsibility, undermined the inhuman practices of the Nazi administration by rescuing the victims of persecution, the qualitative difference between their activities and resistance designed to overthrow the entire system and ultimately to put an end to its many crimes, including the original crime of the 'war of extermination', must not be overlooked.<sup>9</sup> However, the actions of the rescuers in uniform also show that there

<sup>3</sup> Heinrichs, 'Hauptmann d.R. Wilm Hosenfeld', 70. See also the collected papers of Wilm Hosenfeld, *Ich versuche jeden zu retten*; the author is grateful to their editor, Thomas Vogel, for valuable advice.

<sup>4</sup> On the question of motives, see Ganglmair, 'Feldwebel Anton Schmid', 26–7.

<sup>5</sup> Wieniger and Pabst, 'Feldwebel Anton Schmid', 203.

<sup>6</sup> Lustiger, *Schmid*, 55–7, portrays Schmid as a supporter of Jewish partisan groups, but does not offer any reliable evidence for this claim.

<sup>7</sup> Wieninger and Pabst, 'Feldwebel Anton Schmid', 202–3; Lustiger, *Schmid*, 53–4.

<sup>8</sup> Wette, 'Helfer und Retter', 16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

was still scope for members of the Wehrmacht to engage in resistance activities in a broader sense. Their actions give the lie to the majority who repeatedly denied that there was any such opportunity, insisting that 'they had to obey orders'.

## 2. PROTECTION OF MONUMENTS AND WORKS OF ART

### (a) *Monte Cassino*

Saving irreplaceable treasures, like saving human lives, was another way of offering opposition in the closing phase of the war, at a time when Hitler was increasingly taken up with his plans to 'choreograph the dance of death'.<sup>10</sup> Here too, members of the forces who decided to take matters into their own hands faced the prospect of punishment, although the conspicuous case of Anton Schmid appears to be unique. Equally, it was often difficult to determine the boundaries of compliance, and even war crimes. The actions of Lt.-Col. Julius Schlegel, the man who saved the library at Monte Cassino, are a case in point.

In the late summer of 1943, the Italian front reached the town of Cassino as it moved north and, on Hitler's orders, German troops occupied the sixth-century Benedictine monastery, situated in a key position on the hill above the town, to stop the Allied advance on Rome. Schlegel and a certain Lt. Becker, both members of the 'Hermann Göring' Panzer Division, sought permission from the abbot, Dom Gregorio Diamare, and his assembly to remove the irreplaceable treasures, notably the monastery's own library and archives and the art collections from galleries in Naples that were stored in Monte Cassino. Some of these treasures would almost certainly be lost if they remained in the monastery.<sup>11</sup> The monks' doubts about the officers' good intentions were all too understandable, especially as they belonged to a division bearing the name of 'Hermann Göring', perhaps the most celebrated 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles' in the Second World War. In fact, members of the division made no secret of the fact that they intended to let the art-loving Reich marshal have some of the works from Naples in return for permission to move the rest to safety.<sup>12</sup> The operation was originally undertaken by Lt.-Col. Schlegel on his own initiative. Even his divisional commander knew nothing about it at first, and it was regularized only after the German ambassador to the Vatican, Ernst von Weizsäcker, raised the matter with Field Marshal Kesselring.<sup>13</sup> Kesselring gave explicit orders that all the material saved from Monte Cassino was to be handed over to the Vatican,<sup>14</sup> but even he could not prevent thirteen of the

<sup>10</sup> Wegner, 'Hitler'.

<sup>11</sup> For conflicting views, see Klinkhammer, 'Die Abteilung "Kunstschutz"', and Kubin, *Raub oder Schutz?*

<sup>12</sup> Klinkhammer, 'Die Abteilung "Kunstschutz"', 505; Kubin, *Raub oder Schutz?*, 69; Stimpel, *Die deutsche Fallschirmtruppe*, 295.

<sup>14</sup> Klinkhammer, 'Die Abteilung "Kunstschutz"', 507-9.

<sup>13</sup> Weizsäcker, *Erinnerungen*, 363.

pictures from Naples finding their way to a salt mine near Bad Aussee, where they were discovered after the end of the war.

It is still not clear what the two officers engaged in the operation actually intended, or whether they informed the abbot about the real destination of the treasures (which were taken to the divisional supply depot at Spoleto first, and were moved to Rome only after Kesselring intervened). In any event, they really did save priceless treasures from destruction, since on 15 February 1944 Allied bombers reduced the monastery to rubble. Schlegel was arrested after the war, in connection with the events at Monte Cassino, and held for several months while investigations were carried out to determine whether his actions constituted a war crime. The case was eventually dropped. The monastery meanwhile celebrated a special mass in his honour, sent him a document attesting to its gratitude, and welcomed him back as a guest of honour in 1952.<sup>15</sup> The Austrian was still honoured in Cassino in 1998.<sup>16</sup>

Lt.-Col. Schlegel's action was not an act of resistance,<sup>17</sup> nor did he risk his life, but it was at least an independent action against the fundamentally destructive aims of the Nazi regime. Saving works of art is at one end of a broad spectrum that embraces, at the other, saving entire cities and their inhabitants from unnecessary battles.

#### (b) *Paris*

That was the case with Paris, which was handed over to the advancing American and French troops in the middle of August 1944, with hardly a shot fired. The military governor of Paris, Lt.-Gen. Hans Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, was dismissed in the course of the investigations following the assassination attempt (he was not a member of the conspiracy but he had obeyed Stülpnagel's orders and had arrested the leading representatives of the Nazi regime in Paris), and Hitler had then appointed Infantry Gen. Dietrich von Choltitz to the post of 'GOC and military governor of Greater Paris'.<sup>18</sup> Choltitz lacked the military means to play any serious part in the fighting on the rapidly approaching front. His task was to maintain public order and security in the city against increasingly strong French resistance, but he had barely enough forces even for that. On the contrary, his main concern was the treatment he and the troops under his command were likely to receive from the resistance and the public, now in open revolt. It was therefore in his interest to surrender to the Americans, as this would at least afford him and his men some measure of protection.

Hitler had given orders that the bridges over the Seine—now virtually useless from a strategic point of view—were to be destroyed and the city was not

<sup>15</sup> Kubin, *Raub oder Schutz?*, 68, 74.

<sup>16</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, 17 Mar. 1998, [www.berlinonline.de/wissen/berliner-zeitung/.bin/dump.fcgi/1998/0317/feuilleton/0102/](http://www.berlinonline.de/wissen/berliner-zeitung/.bin/dump.fcgi/1998/0317/feuilleton/0102/).

<sup>17</sup> Klinkhammer, 'Die Abteilung "Kunstschutz"', 513–14.

<sup>18</sup> Ludewig, *Rückzug*, 157.



to be allowed to fall into Allied hands until it had been 'reduced to rubble'.<sup>19</sup> Hitler suggested that Choltitz should broadcast a message to the people of Paris, threatening them with the fate that had befallen Warsaw, but Choltitz did not do so.<sup>20</sup> The general must also have known that, in the Reich, families of officers were now jointly liable for their actions and that his own family might be held responsible if he were to hand the French capital over prematurely. The C-in-C West had kept the orders to destroy the city to himself, and had passed them on only at a very late stage when Choltitz no longer had anything like the necessary forces to carry them out.<sup>21</sup> In the end, the military governor held out for only a very short time, surrendering on 25 August without carrying out Hitler's criminal orders. The bridges over the Seine, without which it would have been well-nigh impossible to bring in the necessary supplies to feed the starving French civilian population, escaped destruction.<sup>22</sup> Model gave orders for Choltitz to be court-martialled but, as the erstwhile military governor was now safely in American custody, there was not much anyone could do about it.<sup>23</sup>

Choltitz is certainly not in the same class as the conspirators of 20 July 1944. His action was confined to using the small margin of discretion still available to him to prevent unnecessary bloodshed all round.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, with the increasingly harsh repression after 20 July, it took some courage to do what he did. In the end, Choltitz and his family got off scot-free. Others, who acted in the same way at an even later stage, were not so lucky.

### 3. THE 'FINAL STRUGGLE' IN GERMANY

#### (a) *Ritter von Gadolla and Gotha*

The Austrian Luftwaffe Lt.-Col. Joseph Ritter von Gadolla was appointed military governor of the Thuringian city of Gotha at the end of January 1945. As always in such cases, the city was to be defended to the end and surrender was forbidden.<sup>25</sup> By the end of March/early April 1945, the military situation had become hopeless and all Wehrmacht troops had been pulled out, leaving only a few SS-men and stormtroopers to defend the city. Gadolla called a meeting of the 'defence committee', which included the mayor and other Nazi Party dignitaries. On 3 April 1945, the committee decided to hand the city over to the Americans without a fight. Gadolla had already said that in his view the men of 20 July were heroes, not traitors. He now got into touch with the American troops and succeeded in surrendering the city. But he was

<sup>19</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 614; Ludewig, *Rückzug*, 152, gives a detailed analysis of Hitler's political motives.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ludewig, *Rückzug*, 164–5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 167–8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 168–70; *Germany and the Second World War*, vii. 615, without however mentioning that Model was exonerated because Choltitz had long been beyond German reach, or that the military court refused to open proceedings *in absentia*.

<sup>24</sup> Ludewig, *Rückzug*, 170–1.

<sup>25</sup> Brissa, 'Josef Ritter von Gadolla', 97 f.

subsequently captured by a patrol and brought before a 'drumhead court martial' in Weimar. He pointed out that it was impossible to mount a military defence of the city, and that his sole concern had been to save the civilian population unnecessary bloodshed, but to no avail. He was sentenced to death, and shot on 5 April 1945.

Ritter von Gadolla was not alone. There are many known cases of men being court-martialled and executed for 'cowardice' in the last days of the war, and there must be many more that are not recorded. Hitler himself had Eva Braun's brother-in-law, SS-Gruppenführer and Waffen-SS Lt.-Gen. Hermann Fegelein, shot for 'desertion' in Berlin on 30 April 1945, when the city was already surrounded.<sup>26</sup> The officer in charge of the C-in-C naval forces command platoon, Lt. Asmus Jepsen, was shot on 6 May 1945 because, knowing that the forces in the north had surrendered to Montgomery (on Luneburg Heath, 4 May 1945), he left the platoon and went home.<sup>27</sup> The regime's readiness to take extreme repressive measures against anyone who sought to disengage from the 'stand by the last Goths on Mount Vesuvius' knew no bounds.

(b) *'Freedom Action Bavaria'*

The cases described so far are instances of individual action arising from particular circumstances and determined by those circumstances (although in Fegelein's case military intelligence may have played a part), but there was also an organized if short-lived revolt in, of all locations, the movement's birthplace. Based on loose connections between long-standing anti-Nazi circles in Munich, a secret 'Freedom Action Bavaria' group had been formed, one of the members being the head of the interpreters' section in military district VII, Capt. Rupprecht Gerngroß.<sup>28</sup> Under his leadership, the group planned an uprising in the city at the end of April 1945, with a wide range of objectives. The first was to prevent any military defence of the city. To that end, the Gauleiter and Reich defence commissioner, Paul Giesler, was to be arrested, communication points occupied, and the staff of OB West (Kesselring) put out of action. The small group's military capabilities were far from adequate for this ambitious self-imposed task. In the end, all they managed to do was to take over the Munich-Freimann radio station for a short time on 27 April and broadcast a message the following morning calling for an end to hostilities.<sup>29</sup> The expected popular revolt in Upper Bavaria failed to materialize. People were terrified and, with the end of the war in sight, unwilling to risk everything at the last moment. In any case, neither the Wehrmacht nor the Party leaders had any plans to mount a military defence of Munich at this point. The few remaining viable Wehrmacht

<sup>26</sup> Le Tissier, *Battle of Berlin*, 172-3.

<sup>27</sup> Paul, '... warum muß ich als Verbrecher auf einem Sandhügel sterben?', 143-6.

<sup>28</sup> Troll, 'Aktionen', 647.

<sup>29</sup> Gerngross, *Aufstand*, in particular 115, presents the whole operation essentially as a success but (less convincingly) lists only very limited aims. Brückner, *Kriegsende*, 181-2, 188-9, provides a much more sceptical assessment.

units were already retreating, more or less according to plan, towards the Alps.<sup>30</sup> And there is some evidence that the revolt merely served to stiffen the resolve of any waverers in the Munich Party leadership.<sup>31</sup>

In Munich too, the doomed regime once again reacted with extreme severity. In Penzberg, and elsewhere in Upper Bavaria, drumhead courts martial imposed the death sentence on anyone found guilty of hanging out a white flag in response to the broadcast appeal for an end to hostilities, or of any other expression of war-weariness.<sup>32</sup> Only in Augsburg was the city wrested from the control of the Party and handed over without a fight.<sup>33</sup>

It is certainly questionable whether such a revolt was sensible at this point. What with the poor preparation and the unrealistic appraisal of the relationship between ends and means, there was something amateurish and unreal about it that precluded any signal success on the day. It may well have cost more lives than it saved. Other opponents of National Socialism came to the conclusion that it was better to stay alive and help to rebuild the country after the war.

Ultimately, the differences between such forms of resistance activity and national-conservative resistance are in many respects only a question of degree. Both are equally motivated by a determination to end what had become a pointless war, and to avoid further unnecessary sacrifices. But in other respects, the differences are enormous. In the case of the forms of opposition we have just described, there was either no intention at all to abolish the National Socialist system or, if there was any such intention, it was at least subordinate to the aim of ending the war in the area concerned. In Munich, the leading Nazi figures were to be removed primarily in order to pave the way for the region to surrender. Even in these cases, essentially conformist aims with limited alternative objectives merge almost imperceptibly into goals that are clearly contrary to the system. This shows, once again, how hard it must have been both for the German people and for outsiders to distinguish between the various forms of opposition activity.

It is impossible to determine whether the attempted coup d'état was responsible for the even more repressive policy pursued by the Nazi regime in the final phase of the war. It seems scarcely conceivable that Hitler and his movement would have resigned themselves to their fate more easily without the attempted assassination and putsch. Conversely, reactions in opposition circles to the Berlin revolt after the summer of 1944 are few and far between. Nor is it easy to say whether Stauffenberg and his fellow-conspirators served as a shining example in individual cases, or whether the savage suppression and persecution of the military national-conservative resistance deterred possible 'action' elsewhere. Here too, the isolation of individuals in the uniformed society, and the systematic and deliberate destruction of traditional social structures, meant that apart from a few individual actions there was no organized, nationwide resistance after 20 July 1944.

<sup>30</sup> Brückner, *Kriegesende*, 192.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 194.

<sup>33</sup> Troll, 'Aktionen', 670.

## IX. Effects and Consequences

### I. THE BALANCE TIPS IN THE REGIME'S FAVOUR

THE events of 20 July caused public outrage, not just because the only source of news was the state-controlled media but because, for the vast majority of people, a coup in the middle of a war that was getting worse by the day was unacceptable. The mounting crisis could now—as in 1918—be interpreted as the consequence of sinister machinations and secret conspiracies, distracting attention from the fact that the situation really was hopeless: 'The vast majority of people are increasingly convinced that the small group of officers and traitors who prepared and carried out the attempt on the Führer's life had been systematically undermining the country's defence in all areas for a long time, with the result that the eastern front did not receive the necessary supplies or the requisite weapons and munitions.'<sup>1</sup> The exposure of the plot (the 'clean-up') was accompanied by hopes for an improvement in the war situation—hopes that were pinned primarily on the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the propaganda claim that the plot had been the work of 'a very small gang of criminals', the public subsequently understood from the names mentioned in the reports that extensive sections of the officer corps, the upper-middle class, and the aristocracy had been involved.<sup>3</sup> This raised doubts about the propaganda claim that the people behind the attempted coup d'état were nothing but 'criminal, reactionary riff-raff'.<sup>4</sup> The call to denounce any and everyone who was remotely suspect<sup>5</sup> was therefore, from the very outset, at odds with the need to keep the state in general and the Wehrmacht in particular in good running order. The Reich leadership was consequently obliged, immediately after the attempted putsch, to issue a warning against excesses in the treatment of suspects, and particularly against any wholesale condemnation of those national-conservative circles who might have been hatching the resistance activities but who were nevertheless still essential to the continuation of the National Socialist war.<sup>6</sup> However, Himmler had already opened

<sup>1</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii.6700.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i.7 (22 July 1944); telex OB H.Gr. Mitte (Model) to AOK 2 and others, 25 July 1944, BA-MA RH 19 II/203, fo. 45; report of the Jena main outpost of the Weimar section of the SD, 27 July 1944, Public opinion and attitude vis-à-vis 20 July 1944. Reaction to Himmler's appointment to the post of commander of the replacement army, IfZ, MA 95-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii.6699, 6701 (10 Aug. 1944).

<sup>4</sup> Telex Bormann, Führer headquarters, to all Gauleiters (Most urgent—immediate delivery), 20 July 1944, IfZ, Fa 116, fo. 2.

<sup>5</sup> NSDAP Gauleitung Franken, staff office, circular No. 43/44, 16 Aug. 1944, IfZ, Fa 116, fo. 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, ii. 595 (Bormann to all Gauleiters, circular No. 7), 596 (Head of Party chancellery, circular No. . . /44), 597 (telex head of Party chancellery, Reichsleiter M. Bormann to all Reichsleiters, Gauleiters, heads of units).

the door to such excesses when, immediately after 20 July, he ordered the summary execution of Lt.-Gen. Hans Graf von Sponeck, held in the fortress of Germersheim on a charge of giving independent orders to retreat. Sponeck fitted the stereotype of the defeatist aristocratic general staff officer to perfection, but the fact was that he had been in custody for so long that he could not possibly have had anything to do with the 20 July conspiracy.<sup>7</sup> Hitler himself had added fuel to the fire with his repeated outbursts against the aristocracy,<sup>8</sup> ably supported by Robert Ley's blunt public assertion that those 'blue-blooded swine' were responsible for the attempted coup.<sup>9</sup>

The sweep carried out at the end of August 1944, on the other hand, was only indirectly connected with the events of the previous month. Some 5,000 to 6,000 potential enemies of the regime were arrested on the strength of pre-existing lists, although they had taken no part in the revolt. On the contrary, this operation was directed primarily against people who had been active in the days of the Weimar Republic (including Konrad Adenauer and Kurt Schumacher) and had conspicuously distanced themselves from the national-conservative resistance movement.<sup>10</sup> This wave of arrests was a further step in the radical war on the home front, which Hitler was now free to wage until his own demise.

The events of 20 July 1944 enabled the Party and the SS to effect the changes they had long wanted to make in the Reich defence structure. The most obvious of these was the appointment of Himmler to the post of head of army armaments and commander of the replacement army.<sup>11</sup> The resistance—particularly as the front threatened to approach the borders of the Reich—had wanted a more effective structure at the top with military and police security in the hands of one person, but this aim was only partly achieved now—under very different circumstances—with the chief of the German police taking over the replacement army.<sup>12</sup> With the establishment of 'special forces' and with Himmler taking command of the *Volksgrenadier* divisions, which actually formed part of the army, this development represented a massive encroachment on army preserves by the SS authorities.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bockius, 'General Hans Graf von Sponeck'; Einbeck, *Das Exempel Graf Sponeck*; Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite*, 39–40 n. 58.

<sup>8</sup> See, to this effect, Picker, *Tischgespräche* (1951), 170.

<sup>9</sup> *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, xvii. 6701; Meyer, 'Auswirkungen', 309; Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 588.

<sup>10</sup> Hammer, 'Gewitteraktion', 15–16; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 262–3; for a different interpretation of the causal connection, see Hett and Tuchel, 'Die Reaktionen des NS-Staates auf den Umsturzversuch'.

<sup>11</sup> Annexe 2 to de-nazification questionnaire [Maj.-Gen. ret'd.] Werner Kennes, February 1947, BA-MA MSh 1/2936; [Cavalry General] Carl-Erik Köhler and [Maj.-Gen. ret'd.] Hellmuth Reinhardt, 'The head of army armaments and commander of the replacement army in the context of the army high command', Study P-041dd [1950], fo. 7, BA-MA ZA 1/1932.

<sup>12</sup> Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 103.

<sup>13</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1067; Stumpf, 'Die Luftwaffe', 895; Wegner, *The Waffen-SS*, 346–8.

It was seen as such by interested observers abroad, including Allen Dulles in Switzerland.<sup>14</sup> There is also some evidence that Himmler intended to use the foreign contacts established by the resistance to make his own peace moves, and that he delayed the execution of the Abwehr conspirators and Goerdeler until the very last minute on that account.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, Himmler's long-time chief-of-staff, SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, arranged for the early cessation of hostilities in northern Italy through the said Dulles and his friend Schulze-Gaevernitz.<sup>16</sup>

There were nevertheless some limits to Himmler's growing empire. Hitler decided not to confer executive powers on the military or SS, but to appoint the Gauleiters (in other words, members of the traditional Party hierarchy rather than the SS) as Reich defence commissioners, subordinate as such to Goebbels in his capacity as Reich plenipotentiary for total war, a move that Bormann had opposed in May.<sup>17</sup> The confusion over the division of responsibilities that had long been a characteristic feature of the civil administration now extended to defence, with military responsibilities confined to 'front-line duties only'.<sup>18</sup>

All these measures affected mainly the army, as—with a few exceptions such as Hofacker or Berthold Graf Stauffenberg—the Luftwaffe and the navy had proved to be 'reliable'. Particularly humiliating treatment was reserved for the senior service of the Wehrmacht, when Hitler ordered a 'court of honour' to be convened to strip officers who had taken part in the conspiracy of their rank and expel them from the army.<sup>19</sup> This was the neatest way of circumventing the problem that, as soldiers, they were subject to martial law and could not therefore be sentenced by the people's court—although, here too, there were precedents. It was characteristic of Hitler that the 'court of honour' consisted of high-ranking officers who no longer held key positions, headed by Field Marshal von Rundstedt, who had been transferred to the Führer's reserve, and Gen. Guderian, who had been appointed acting chief of the general staff on 20 July 1944. If Hitler hoped that this appointment would affect their independence, he was very soon disabused.<sup>20</sup>

The 'court of honour' expelled fifty-five army officers from the Wehrmacht altogether, and dismissed twenty-nine more.<sup>21</sup> It is hard to say how many officers of the national-conservative resistance perished. 'Membership of the resistance'

<sup>14</sup> Reports of 27 and 28 July 1944, NA, RG 226 E 99 B 14, fo. 58a, cited in Heideking, 'Die "Breakers"-Akte', 30, 46 n. 57.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, to this effect, John, *Falsch und zu Spät*, 179.

<sup>16</sup> Schiemann, 'Operation Sunrise'.

<sup>17</sup> Nolzen, 'Von der geistigen Assimilation zur institutionellen Kooperation', 76.

<sup>18</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 483; Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 102.

<sup>19</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 624–5; Geilen, 'Das Widerstandsbild in der Bundeswehr', 63; Hett and Tuchel, 'Reaktionen'.

<sup>20</sup> On Rundstedt's collaboration, see Vogel, 'Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt', 230, and Ziemke, 'Von Rundstedt', 490; on Guderian, see Meyer, 'Generaloberst Guderian', 16.

<sup>21</sup> Hett and Tuchel, 'Reaktionen', 379.

is, itself, not a very useful criterion. In the aftermath of 20 July many members of the Kreisau circle were killed, together with members of the Abwehr who had been arrested in 1943, although none of them had any direct connection with the attempted coup d'état. So it is not really possible to give exact figures. The task of compiling accurate statistics is further complicated by the fact that some of those executed (for example, Maj. von Leonrod's godfather, chaplain Hermann Wehrle) had only limited knowledge of the plans or were sentenced solely on the ground that they had given shelter to wanted men after 20 July or otherwise protected them from prosecution. One thinks of Maj. Kuhn's divisional commander, who gave him an opportunity to commit suicide which Kuhn then used to escape, with the result that Lt.-Gen. Gustav Heistermann von Ziehlberg was court-martialled, condemned to death, and shot.<sup>22</sup> These methodological considerations explain why all figures, including the widely accepted figures of 700 arrests and 110 deaths,<sup>23</sup> inevitably give only a rough idea.

The 'joint liability' of relatives, introduced in connection with 20 July 1944 and initially limited to the conspirators' families (some 180 individuals), quickly became a general means of exerting pressure on political undesirables, and was soon used against members of the families of 'deserters' at the front or prisoners of war who joined the National Committee for a 'Free Germany'.<sup>24</sup>

The events of 20 July signalled a radical change in Germany's conduct of the war. It had long been a war on the home front too. From now on, the words 'total war', which had so far been conceived as a propaganda call to mobilize all forces, designated the energetic prosecution and 'cumulative radicalization'<sup>25</sup> of this aspect of the war drive.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. INCREASING MANIPULATION OF THE ELITE, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NSFO

Even within the Wehrmacht, increasing weight was now attached to ideological indoctrination of the troops, subject only to the constraints imposed by the military demands on all fronts and by the sheer exhaustion of units and formations.<sup>27</sup> This applied particularly to the army, which was suspected by the Nazi leadership of being a hotbed of reaction and had provided most of the members of the 20 July conspiracy. One important response to the attempted coup was to impose conformity upon the army more energetically and, in particular, to make more effective use of the National Socialist guidance officers (*Nationalsozialistische Führungs-offiziere*, NSFOs) established in accordance

<sup>22</sup> Chavkin and Kalganov, 'Neue Quellen', 363; Haase, *Das Reichskriegsgericht*, 240–9.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffmann, *Widerstand*, 607; Hett and Tüchel, 'Reaktionen', 380.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 383–7.

<sup>25</sup> Term used in Mommsen, 'Der Nationalsozialismus: Kumulative Radikalisierung', 785, 789.

<sup>26</sup> *Germany and the Second World War*, v/II. 1069–70.

<sup>27</sup> The 'battle for hearts and minds' is the subject of Jürgen Förster's study in the present volume, so there is no need to go into detail. For our purposes, the radicalization of this process as a consequence of military resistance is of greater interest.



with orders issued by Hitler in December 1943—an institution that did not exist in this form in the Luftwaffe or the navy. From the summer of 1944, the NSFOs' work was increasingly controlled by the Party, and the Wehrmacht high command's influence on this aspect of the troops' education diminished accordingly—one more step towards the establishment of the National Socialist people's army.<sup>28</sup>

Himmler's command of the Volksgrenadier divisions entitled him, even before 20 July 1944, to make the most important appointments himself; and his power to influence appointments to the highest posts in the army increased even more when he took command of the replacement army. Waffen-SS access to the Reich's reserves of manpower and the new Wehrmacht officer recruitment policy based more clearly on ideological criteria arose from the amalgamation of offices that had previously operated separately—and often in competition—namely 'recruiting offices for future army officers' (recruiting offices for army volunteers) and SS recruiting offices for senior SS and police officers. The Wehrmacht lost access to its own organization for the recruitment of future officers.<sup>29</sup> The change of military elites accelerated, further encouraged by the increasingly harsh treatment of officers who had fallen foul of the regime or had not been sufficiently keen to obey Hitler's orders to hold out. In the wake of the execution of generals like Graf Sponeck or Heistermann von Ziehlberg, countless 'defeatists' were sentenced to death in the final phase of the war, always with the additional aim of filling the army 'officer corps' with 'fanatical fighters' instead.<sup>30</sup>

In the general staff, the intellectual elite of the army, this process found an echo in an order issued by Guderian on 29 July 1944 in which he insisted that every member of the general staff must be an NSFO. Guderian's insistence that the ideological qualifications of general staff officers must be equal to their professional ability spelled the end of the tradition of sound judgement, typical of the Prussian-German general staff, which had in any case already in the course of the war worn very thin in the Wehrmacht high command.<sup>31</sup> Like so many radical measures in the final phase of the war, this order was subject to the constraints imposed by the exigencies of war—it was almost impossible to obey it or to take the necessary personnel measures it implied. Right up to the end of the war there were repeated instances of conflicts between members of the general staff and their fanatical commanders, but when that happened the general staff officers found they could not automatically rely on backing from the Army high command. All these developments had already

<sup>28</sup> Besson, 'Geschichte des NSFO', 80–1; for a more general account, see also Zoepf, *Wehrmacht*.

<sup>29</sup> Reichsführer SS and commander of the replacement army (undated, signed original, between 9 Aug. and 11 Nov. 1944), BA-MA RH 14/50, fos. 5–6.

<sup>30</sup> Kunz, 'Die Wehrmacht in der Agonie', 102; for further examples, see Gerngross, *Aufstand*, 79; on the ideological aspect of the process, see *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 303 (26 Aug. 1944).

<sup>31</sup> Messerschmidt, *Wehrmacht im NS-Staat*, 435; Mühleisen, 'Hellmuth Stieff', 369.

started before 20 July 1944. They were—as already noted—among the assorted motives that caused the military members of the conspiracy to act.<sup>32</sup> The collapse of the revolt on 20 July 1944 gave the regime the necessary incentive to speed up the process. Thus, a dispatch from the NSFO in the OKW, Gen. Hermann Reinecke, in August 1944 reads: ‘With the elimination of the traitors, the last opponents of the decisive politicization of the Wehrmacht have been removed. The NS guidance work should now be able to proceed without further impediments.’<sup>33</sup>

Did the events of 20 July 1944, in a bitter reversal of their authors’ intentions, ultimately strengthen the hold of National Socialism in the territory where it still held sway, and so cause the war to last longer? At all events, the final phase in the reign of terror was now about to begin.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Besson, ‘Geschichte des NSFO’, 82.

<sup>33</sup> Priority letter OKW/NSF, 3 Aug. 1944, in Besson, ‘Geschichte des NSFO’, doc. 13, 113.

<sup>34</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 483.

## X. Mutiny, or Moral Revulsion?

### I. THE POLITICAL AIMS OF THE RESISTANCE

THE failure of the revolt of 20 July 1944 gave the Third Reich the necessary energy to carry the war it had started on to the end—both at home and abroad. It also meant that there was no longer any need to fear that, in the event of a successful coup, the incoming government would be blamed as in 1918 for the country's defeat and the old legend of back-stabbing and betrayal might be reborn. People were indeed heard to say after 20 July that the setbacks in the war were the result of sabotage by rebel officers and 'bourgeois reactionaries'. It followed, so they thought, that things would look up now that this problem had been sorted out. But this soon proved to be a false assumption.

However, those who take a positive view of these developments, in the context of a return to sound political institutions in the post-war period,<sup>1</sup> should not forget the enormous suffering that accompanied this final phase of the war when Germany, too, became a battlefield. The last phase of the Holocaust, the increasingly heavy air raids, the fighting on all fronts, flight and expulsion: the result was that more Germans died in the last few months of the war than in the preceding five years.<sup>2</sup> Add to that the immeasurable material losses, notably in living space, infrastructure, and industrial plant. Plus the uncomfortable reflection that the German people's 'self-purifying powers', repeatedly invoked by Goerdeler, were never anywhere near strong enough to throw off the criminal Nazi regime.

Opinion differed in the various resistance groups as to whether it was better to let the Nazi regime dig its own grave, or whether there was a moral imperative to end the unnecessary deaths as soon as possible. 'Resistance' is a useful term for research purposes, but it would be a mistake to suppose that it denotes a single, unified, monolithic group or organization. The shadowy idea, occasionally invoked, of a 'community of resistance fighters'<sup>3</sup> tended to vanish in the light of the very different motives and political agendas of those seeking to remove the regime or even, as the lowest common denominator, to end the war.

It is not true that the primacy of the policy was never challenged. The idea that the 1920s, an age of 'standardization, militarization, and ritualization', had

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt-Hackenberg, 20. *Juli 1944*, 106; see, to the same effect, Col. (general staff, ret'd.) Hans Joachim Ludendorff, 'Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben: Kriegsende, Kapitulation, Kriegsgefangenschaft, Review-Board-Verfahren und Zivilinternierung in britischen Lagern. Anfang Mai 1945 bis Anfang März 1947', pt. I: 1 May 1945–27 June 1947, Starnberg 1985, 1, BA-MA MStg 200/887; Schollwer, *Potsdamer Tagebuch*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Wette, 'Zwischen Untergangspathos und Überlebenswillen', 9–10; Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste*, 238–9.

<sup>3</sup> Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 980.

left its imprint on many of the younger members of the resistance, and that rejection of those values was the true spiritual achievement of the resistance,<sup>4</sup> is as groundless as the theory that the various resistance groups shared a 'common civility'.<sup>5</sup> Stauffenberg and his closest fellow-conspirators were all too clearly seeking to establish—temporarily at least—a military dictatorship. Goerdeler and his closest associates were kept out of the detailed plans for the coup d'état, not only in order to keep the conspiracy secret but also to limit the influence of politicians who were deemed to be too conservative. The increasing estrangement between the civil and military leaders of the conspiracy was ascribable not to purely practical considerations but to fundamental political differences.<sup>6</sup>

Military resistance activities thus have a distinct and separate place within the national-conservative resistance as a whole. The distinction between 'younger generation' and 'older generation'<sup>7</sup> is less important than the distinction between military and civil conspiracy.<sup>8</sup> In the final phase of the war, only the military group attached to Stauffenberg was in a position to make the necessary practical preparations for a coup. As a result, their opinion carried more weight in political disputes with the civilian conspirators. How the balance of power between the two groups might have changed, had the assassination attempt and the coup succeeded, must remain an open question.

A few political figures and trade unionists from Weimar Republic days were involved, but this should not obscure the fact that a return to Weimar conditions was expressly ruled out.<sup>9</sup> A man like Leber was in many respects already an outsider in the SPD before 1933, and his close friendship with the intellectual Stauffenberg was based on certain fundamental convictions about national policy which they shared and which cannot have been typical of the broad mass of SPD members. Opposition produced a heady mix of socialist, nationalist, and social idealist concepts that were often almost indistinguishable from National Socialist dogma.<sup>10</sup> This also applies to the subject, discussed at length in the research, of the national-conservative resistance position on the Jewish question.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the conspirators were members of the upper classes or the nobility.<sup>12</sup> As officials, diplomats, or officers, they came from the higher echelons of the various branches of the establishment elite, and some had even joined various obscure right-wing groups after 1918. With such a history, it was often

<sup>4</sup> Steinbach, 'Zwischen Gefolgschaft, Gehorsam und Widerstand', 279.

<sup>5</sup> Id., 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 992.

<sup>6</sup> For new material on the subject, see Goerdeler, *Politische Schriften*.

<sup>7</sup> Schieder, 'Zwei Generationen', and Schwerin, 'Weg der "Jungen Generation"'.  
<sup>8</sup> Heinemann, 'Illusionen', 1066–8.

<sup>9</sup> Mommsen, 'Gesellschaftsbild', remains an important study on this subject.

<sup>10</sup> Bahar, *Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalismus*, 16, 140; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 148–9; Hamerow, *Road to the Wolf's Lair*, 19–21.

<sup>11</sup> Dipper, 'Widerstand und die Juden'; Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung', 403–7; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 110 (31 July 1944).

<sup>12</sup> On the role of the aristocracy in the resistance, see the recent work by Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, ch. 12.6.

difficult for them to identify with the Weimar Republic. They were united in rejecting 'the common herd', 'egalitarianism', and 'Bolshevization',<sup>13</sup> but these terms denoted the political system of 1919 to 1933 as well as the National Socialist 'society of camps' which embraced every aspect of life once it took over.<sup>14</sup> So anyone who wanted to avoid a return to 'Weimar' had to take all possible steps to prevent things getting out of control, as they had in the winter of 1918/19 when the result had been the establishment of the now-discredited republic.

For officers, resisting National Socialism was also resisting the ideological indoctrination of the army. The Gestapo interrogation reports contain repeated and highly critical references to the officers' apparently apolitical attitude,<sup>15</sup> but that attitude was simply in line with an old German military tradition. So Hans von Seeckt's concept of a 'state within a state' took the form in some (exceptional) cases of immunity to the impact of Nazi ideology on the upper echelons of the army. If the civilian national-conservative resistance was a revolt against the 'creeping depoliticization of the National Socialist society',<sup>16</sup> then the military resistance must be understood primarily as a revolt against the ideological indoctrination and deprofessionalization ('amateurism') of the military leadership.

It is questionable whether broader sections of the population could have been won over to this somewhat backward-looking, defensive way of thinking. The habitual reliance on traditional military and in a more general sense state-authoritarian values meant that no serious attempt was ever made to engage the people in this way. The regal, paternalistic attitudes of the national-conservative conspirators, imbued with ideas of duty rather than revolution, were no match for the enormous drive—real or assumed—of the National Socialist 'revolution'.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. RESISTANCE AS A PROCESS

There were many purely professional motives for military resistance activities. The National Socialist tendency to value conviction and 'fanatical determination to hold on' more than technical and professional competence was naturally greeted with protests from general staff officers, most of whom were highly qualified. But such protests were initially by no means tantamount to 'resistance' as we have defined it. On the contrary, the readiness to engage in resistance activities designed to bring down the system grew, in a long

<sup>13</sup> Klaus, 'Preußische Soldatentradiation', 536; *Dossier: Kreisauer Kreis*, 203; Heideking and Mauch, 'Das Herman-Dossier', 591; Mommsen, 'Das Scheitern', 136; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 166–7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 182–3.

<sup>15</sup> *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 273–4 (20 Aug. 1944), 302–3 (25 Aug. 1944).

<sup>16</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 176.

<sup>17</sup> Mommsen, 'Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsreformpläne', 575; see also, to the same effect, Müller, 'Nationalkonservative Eliten', 40; Aly, 'Hitlers Volksstaat'.

and sometimes painful process, out of a desire for improvements within the parameters of the system.

It was widely recognized in the officer corps that relations between the Party and the Wehrmacht would have to be 'clarified' once the war was won. This was also acknowledged by officers who had no connection with military resistance activities.<sup>18</sup> Here, too, there was an almost unbroken progression from alternatives within the system to the central demands of the military opposition. An outside observer could easily get the impression that the leading figures in the resistance movement were merely members of the old military caste seeking to retain their outdated privileges, in other words members of the caste that the western Allies held responsible for German aggression in two world wars.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the resistance wanted more than that, it wanted to ensure that the enormous sacrifices of the men at the front and the civilians at home did not in the end serve to keep a criminal regime in power.

However, it would be a mistake to reduce the resistance to a set of utilitarian objectives, particularly in the final phase of the war. Members of the inner circle of conspirators gradually realized in the course of 1944, as 20 July approached, that a different, non-National Socialist, German government was unlikely to achieve anything of consequence. The country was certainly going to be occupied, so this now applied not only to their earlier foreign policy ambitions but also to the possibilities for political change at home.

The surprising thing is that none of the key military and civilian members of the resistance gave up. Even in the case of those who had originally acted from military or political motives, other reasons had always applied or had supplanted the original ones. The last weeks of the conspiracy produced many pregnant and much-quoted statements, some of slightly doubtful authenticity, bearing witness to the ultimately moral nature of the motives for resistance. They include the statement attributed to Tresckow: 'The assassination must be attempted at all costs. Even if it should not succeed, an attempt to seize power in Berlin must be undertaken. What matters now is no longer the practical purpose of the coup, but to prove to the world and for the record of history that the men of the resistance movement dared to take the decisive step. Compared to this objective, nothing else is of consequence.' There is also Tresckow's final pronouncement on the failure of the revolt: 'In a few hours' time, I shall stand before God, and answer for both my actions and the things I neglected to do. I think I can with a clear conscience stand by all that I have done in the battle against Hitler. Just as God once promised Abraham that he would spare Sodom if only ten just men could be found in the city, I also have reason to hope that, for our sake, he will not destroy Germany. No one among us can complain about his death, for whoever joined our ranks

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Stauffenberg's experiences in attempting to recruit Capt. Freiherr Truchseß von Wetzhausen among others: *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, i. 312–13 (29 Aug. 1944).

<sup>19</sup> *From Hitler's Doorstep*, doc. 4–22 (Radiotelephone Transmission No. 178), 337; Heideking, 'Die "Breakers"-Akte', 30.

put on the poisoned shirt of Nessus. A man's moral worth is established only at the point where he is prepared to give his life for his convictions.'<sup>20</sup> Clearly both Tresckow and those to whom his remarks were addressed were perfectly conversant with biblical history and classical mythology. National-conservative resistance had its roots in a milieu where people grew up with the Bible and great literature, and where Christian values were taken for granted, including the statements in the story of the Creation about the sanctity of human life. It is no coincidence that a number of devout Christians, Protestant pastors, and Catholic priests played a prominent part in the resistance. As Moltke once said, it was ultimately a question of 'how the picture of man can be re-established in the hearts of our fellow-citizens'.<sup>21</sup>

Both Stauffenbergs expressed similar sentiments: 'It is now time something was done. But the man who has the courage to do something must do it in the knowledge that he will go down in German history as a traitor. If he does not do it, however, he will be a traitor to his own conscience.' And, shortly before 20 July: 'The most terrible thing is knowing that we cannot succeed and yet that we have to do it, for our country and our children.'<sup>22</sup>

These statements should not however obscure the fact that the motives they reveal, now reduced to purely ethical considerations, were not entirely typical of the essential spirit of the resistance.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, it was marked in this final phase by a loss of almost every hope with regard to domestic and foreign policy, in the light of the likely failure of the entire plan for a coup.<sup>24</sup> First and foremost, for Tresckow, Stauffenberg, and many—probably most—of the others, was the concern born of professional responsibility to do the right thing for their country in a war accepted as a fact of life.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, only members of the inner circle of conspirators are known to have expressed such sentiments. Apart from Stauffenberg and Tresckow, who were clearly distinguished by their Christian faith (Stauffenberg as a Catholic,<sup>26</sup> and Tresckow as an Protestant Christian), their idealism with its echoes of Stefan George,<sup>27</sup> and their strict adherence to traditional Prussian values, which set them apart from most of the other, more pragmatic, members of the conspiracy, only a few others are on record as having expressed such radical views: Yorck, Haeften, and Schwerin-Schwanefeld in statements before the people's court.<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that others, Bussche for example, were also

<sup>20</sup> Schlabrendorff, *Secret War*, 109, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Moltke, *A German of the Resistance: The Last Letters of Count H. J. von Moltke*, 16, quoted in Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 183.

<sup>22</sup> Both passages as quoted in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 243.

<sup>23</sup> See the somewhat misleading statement by Gersdorff in Hanno Kremer, *Der 20. Juli in Paris*. Broadcast by RIAS Berlin, 19 and 22 July 1979, 3, IfZ, MS 200/85.

<sup>24</sup> Roon, 'Widerstand und Krieg', 65; Ueberschär, 'Militäropposition', 360; Kopp, *Paul von Hase*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 283–4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 285.

<sup>27</sup> On the 'oath' or 'vow' devised by Rudolf Fahrner and Stauffenberg, see inter alia *ibid.* 293–5.

<sup>28</sup> Hoffman, *Widerstand*, 626; Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Johanniter', 3.



deeply affected; but it is difficult to imagine that any such thoughts crossed the minds of men like Helldorff or Nebe. So talk of 'moral revulsion' places undue limits on a proper review of military resistance activity.<sup>29</sup>

The result was that most Germans who came into contact with the conspiracy, like the rest of the world, had only a vague idea of the military opposition. To outside observers, the difference between military opposition and alternative policies within the parameters of the system was not sufficiently clear. One of the strengths of the conspiracy was its ability to recruit support by subtly broaching initially harmless topics, and to combine open aims such as the assumption of executive powers with other, covert, objectives. So by no means all those involved in the conspiracy were aware of the full scope of the plans for the coup. This was both a strength and a weakness. The fundamental differences with the system were often concealed, especially from the outside world, so the enemy could not be given any firm assurances as to the conduct of a government established after the coup, and the conspirators' domestic policy options were limited accordingly.

But even this assertion must be qualified, if one examines the options open to the opposition. Resistance could come only from within, so the close connection with the regime was no accident, and the assertion that the conspirators were part of the system, although 'intellectually' outside it,<sup>30</sup> is not true of all of them, and true to varying degrees of those at the cutting edge.<sup>31</sup> The almost ubiquitous surveillance in society at large meant that a coup d'état could be organized only in a social niche. In that respect, the failure of the resistance is attributable to the blanket repression of the Nazi system.

Active resistance, in the sense of an existential threat to the regime in the form of practical plans for a coup, was not a mass manifestation in the German war society, either in the civilian population or among the military.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, resistance is essentially a minority manifestation and, for that very reason, it cannot properly be held to qualify the collective responsibility of broad sections of the German population and the Wehrmacht for the criminal war. On the other hand, the various forms of active and passive resistance show that there really were other options, however great or small the room for manoeuvre may have been in particular cases.

But there were only a few who finally decided, in a long process and by almost imperceptible degrees, to stop toying with loyal alternative concepts and 'moaning and groaning', and to engage in active opposition. They surrounded themselves with an outwardly indistinguishable circle of associates, who did not always take that step to such a radical extent. Thus, temporally, socially, and

<sup>29</sup> See the MGFA exhibition, *Aufstand des Gewissens*, and the accompanying publication issued under the same title; also Echternkamp, *Ansichtssache Widerstand* (in preparation).

<sup>30</sup> See, to this effect, Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 986.

<sup>31</sup> *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, p. xxiv; Mommsen, 'Der Widerstand gegen Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft', 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Die deutsche Gesellschaft*, p. xxii.

ideologically, resistance was the child of the Nazi regime, a child that gradually grew up to be radically opposed to its parent.

### 3. THE PROBLEMS OF EVALUATION

'Was it "moral revulsion" against the rule of force and the Holocaust? . . . Or was it a calculated attempt to save the firm from impending bankruptcy by bringing in a new boss?'<sup>33</sup> To put the question in those terms is to set up a false dichotomy. If the slightly frivolous reference to 'the firm' is taken to mean 'Germany' or 'the army', then every step to save the Reich and its army, which were certainly regarded by the national-conservative conspirators as substantially moral quantities, was most probably prompted by 'moral revulsion'. There is nothing immoral about officers ending a pointless war or seeking to prevent the useless sacrifice of the men entrusted to them.<sup>34</sup>

The official habit of reducing the resistance, particularly the military resistance, to its ethical and moral aspects does not do it full justice in historical terms.<sup>35</sup> Just as historians were quick to draw attention to the importance of political objectives in the case of the civilian resistance groups (the Kreisau circle, Goerdeler's group, workers' resistance groups), so too it is essential to look at military motives and objectives in the case of the military resistance. If the civilian conspirators 'were impelled as a general rule by a determination so to shape their political image and actions during their lifetime that the facts would be overlooked in an attempt to depict them as perfect examples of moral rectitude and to erase from the record anything that appears to be inconsistent with that picture',<sup>36</sup> then the same is true *pari passu* of the military conspirators. Military resistance is not a sentimental, romantic affair, and it cannot be reduced simply to an attempt to free the German people from guilt and to 'save souls'.<sup>37</sup>

It is also wrong to present 'rigid morality' and 'military tradition' as opposite poles between which the military resistance oscillated,<sup>38</sup> especially as strict morality was a traditional part of the military code. Faced with the fast-diminishing options available in the summer of 1944, the well-established and binding ethical framework is still discernible behind the wide range of political and social traditions. When Stauffenberg cried: 'Long live holy Germany!',<sup>39</sup> as he awaited execution in the courtyard of the Bendlerblock, it is clear that he was moved by something more than expediency. Tresckow had already said something to the same effect the summer before, in a speech he gave on the occasion

<sup>33</sup> Klaus, 'Zu wenig und zu spät?', 276.

<sup>34</sup> Mommsen, 'Die Stellung der Militäropposition', 125.

<sup>35</sup> Messerschmidt, 'Motive', 115; for another different account, see Jacobsen's introduction to *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung*, p. xxiv, with references to Hoffmann, *History of German Resistance*, and Rothfels, *The German Opposition*.

<sup>36</sup> Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne', 201-2.

<sup>37</sup> See, to this effect, Steinbach, 'Soldatischer Widerstand', 43.

<sup>38</sup> Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 987; for a more balanced view, Wentker, 'Widerstand gegen Hitler', 4.

<sup>39</sup> Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 277 and 353 n. 86.

of his sons' confirmation in the Potsdam garrison church: 'The spirit of Prussia is inseparably bound up with the concept of freedom. The true spirit of Prussia is a synthesis of obligation and freedom, subordination willingly accepted and domination rightly understood, pride in self and understanding for others, hardness and sympathy. Without that synthesis, there is a danger of sinking into soulless servility and narrow-minded self-righteousness . . . It cannot be too strongly emphasized, particularly at this time, that this Prussian-German ethic is inseparably bound up with the Christian ethic.'<sup>40</sup> 'Moral revulsion' was at the heart of the 'political revolt' and the 'military revolt' from a very early stage, and it loomed increasingly large as the political and military options diminished in the approach to 20 July 1944. Albrecht Haushofer has paid literary tribute to this resistance:

Not one who thought about his own advantage,  
Not one not watching, as a duty felt,  
In strength and glory or in mortal danger,  
Out of deep concern for the people's life.<sup>41</sup>

The German national-conservatives bore some of the responsibility for the rise of Nazi rule; they provided the nucleus of the executive elite that underpinned the regime for twelve years. But they also produced the only resistance that presented any real threat. It is therefore no surprise that their political agenda was not founded on the ideas and values of the first German republic. The resistance cannot therefore be claimed without qualification as part of the tradition of parliamentary government enshrined in the Basic Law, a claim that was often made in the early days of the Federal Republic.<sup>42</sup> Resistance is represented as the 'contemporary alternative to fascism'.<sup>43</sup> If we judge it now by the superficial moral standard of how close it comes to or how far it falls short of the values enshrined in the Basic Law, we fail to do justice to the sacrifice of the few who risked their lives to stand up for what was right and against what was wrong.

But the various groups of the national-conservative resistance did not continue to hold the views they held before 1933. Their political ideas developed, and they adopted a number of different approaches over the years. Common to almost all of them was the hope of finding a 'third way', a way to escape 'materialism' in its two manifestations, 'capitalism' and 'Marxism'.<sup>44</sup> The Third Reich in its final phase hanged 'the best heads', largely destroyed the national-conservative counter-elite, and prevented their ideas from having any lasting impact on post-war Germany. One thing it could not destroy: the German people's hope for a just, peace-loving social order under the rule of law.

<sup>40</sup> Henning von Tresckow, *Ich bin der ich war*, 52.

<sup>41</sup> Haushofer, *Moabit Sonnets*, 30 (Sonnet XXII, Comrades).

<sup>42</sup> Steinbach, 'Zum Verhältnis der Ziele der militärischen und zivilen Widerstandsgruppen', 995.

<sup>43</sup> Mommsen, 'Moralischer Wiederherstellung', 15.

<sup>44</sup> Rüther, *Widerstand*, 463; Mommsen, 'Bürgerlicher Widerstand', 56.

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MGM	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen</i>
VfZ	<i>Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte</i>
WWR	<i>Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau</i>

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