

CHAPTER VII: THE STRUGGLE WITH THE REDS

In 1919–20 and also in 1921 I attended some of the bourgeois meetings. Invariably I had the same feeling towards these as towards the compulsory dose of castor oil in my boyhood days.

It had to be taken because it was good for one, but it certainly tasted unpleasant. If it were possible to tie ropes round the German people and forcibly drag them to these bourgeois ‘meetings’, to keep them there behind barred doors and to allow nobody to escape until the meeting closed, then this procedure might prove successful in the course of a few hundred years.

For my own part I must frankly admit that, in such circumstances, I should not find life worth living and indeed I should no longer wish to be a German.

But, thank God, all that is impossible, and so it is not surprising that the sane and unspoilt masses shun these ‘bourgeois mass meetings’ as the devil shuns holy water.

I came to know the prophets of the bourgeois *Weltanschauung*, and I was not surprised at what I learned, as I knew that they attached little importance to the spoken word.

At that time, I attended meetings of the Democrats, the German Nationalists, the German People’s Party and the Bavarian People’s Party (the Centre Party of Bavaria).

What struck me at once was the homogeneous uniformity of the audiences. Nearly always they were made up exclusively of party members.

The whole affair was more like a yawning card party than an assembly of people who had just passed through a great revolution.

The speakers did all they could to maintain this tranquil atmosphere. They declaimed, or rather read out, their speeches in the style of an intellectual newspaper article or a learned treatise, avoiding all forcible expressions.

Here and there a feeble professorial joke would be introduced, whereupon the people sitting at the speaker’s table felt themselves obliged to laugh—not loudly or infectiously, but with well-bred reserve.

Oh, those people at the speaker's table! I once attended a meeting in the Wagner Hall in Munich. It was a demonstration to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig. The speech was delivered, or rather read out, by a venerable old professor from one or other of the universities.

The committee sat on the platform: one monocle on the right, another monocle on the left, and in the centre a gentleman with no monocle.

All three of them were punctiliously attired in morning dress, and I had the impression of being present in a court of justice just as the death-sentence was about to be pronounced or at a christening or some more solemn religious ceremony.

The so-called speech, which in printed form may have read quite well, had a disastrous effect. After three-quarters of an hour the audience fell into a sort of hypnotic trance, which was interrupted only when some man or woman left the hall, or by the clatter which the waitresses made, or by the increased yawning of members of the audience.

I had posted myself behind three workmen who were present either out of curiosity or because they were sent there by their parties.

From time to time they glanced at one another with an ill-concealed grin, nudged one another with their elbows and then silently left the hall. One could see that they had no intention whatsoever of interrupting the proceedings, nor indeed was it necessary to do so.

At long last the proceedings showed signs of drawing to a close. After the professor, whose voice had meanwhile become more and more inaudible, had finally ended his speech the gentleman without the monocle delivered a rousing peroration to the assembled 'German sisters and brethren.'

On behalf of the audience and himself he expressed his thanks for the magnificent lecture which they had just heard from Professor X and emphasised how deeply the Professor's words had moved them all.

If a general discussion on the lecture were to take place it would be tantamount to profanity, and he thought he was voicing the opinion of all present in suggesting that such a discussion should not be held.

Therefore, he would ask the assembly to rise from their seats and join in singing the patriotic song, *Wir Binden Einig Volk von Brüdern*.

The proceedings finally closed with the singing of the anthem, *Deutschland über Alles*. It appeared to me that when the second verse was reached the voices were fewer and that only when the refrain was reached did they swell louder.

When we reached the third verse my suspicion that a good many of those present were not very familiar with the text was confirmed. But what does that matter when such a song is sung whole-heartedly and fervidly by an assembly of German Nationalists?

After this the meeting broke up and everyone hurried to get outside, one to his glass of beer, one to a cafe, and others simply into the fresh air.

Out into the fresh air! That was also my one desire. Was this the way to commemorate a heroic struggle in which hundreds of thousands of Prussians and Germans had fought?

No, a thousand times no! That sort of thing might find favour with the Government, it being merely a 'peaceful' meeting.

The minister responsible for law and order had no need to fear that enthusiasm might suddenly get the better of public decorum and induce these people to pour out of the room and, instead of dispersing to public houses and cafés, march four abreast through the town singing *Deutschland hoch in Ehren* and causing some unpleasantness to a police force in need of sleep.

He had reason to be well satisfied with this type of citizen. On the other hand, the National Socialist meetings were by no means 'peaceable' affairs.

Two distinct *Weltanschauungen* raged in bitter opposition to one another, and these meetings did not close with the mechanical rendering of a dull patriotic song, but rather with a passionate outbreak of popular national feeling.

It was imperative from the start to introduce rigid discipline into our meetings and establish the authority of the chairman absolutely.

Our purpose was not to pour out a mixture of soft-soap bourgeois talk; what we had to say was meant to arouse the opponents at our meetings!

How often did they not turn up in large numbers with a few agitators among them ready, judging by the expression on all their faces, to finish us off

there and then.

How often did they turn up in strength, those supporters of the Red Flag, having been previously instructed to smash up everything once and for all, and put an end to our meetings.

More often than not everything hung in the balance, and only the chairman's ruthless determination and the rough handling by our hall-guards baffled our adversaries 'intentions'. They had every reason to be irritated.

The fact that we had chosen red as the colour for our posters sufficed to attract them to our meeting. The ordinary bourgeoisie were very shocked to see that we had also chosen the symbolic red of Bolshevism and they regarded this as something ambiguously significant.

It was whispered in German Nationalist circles that we also were merely another variety of Marxists, perhaps even Marxists suitably disguised, or better still, Socialists.

The actual difference between Socialism and Marxism still remains a mystery to these people to this day. The charge of Marxism was conclusively proved when it was discovered that at our meetings we deliberately substituted the word 'compatriots' for 'Ladies and Gentlemen' and addressed each other as 'Party Comrade.'

We used to roar with laughter at these silly faint-hearted bourgeois and their efforts to puzzle out our origin, our intentions and our aims.

We chose red for our posters after careful deliberation, our intention being to irritate the Left, so as to arouse their attention and tempt them to come to our meetings—if only in order to break them up—so that in this way we might have a chance of talking to the people.

In those years it was indeed a delightful experience to follow the constantly changing tactics of our perplexed and helpless adversaries.

First of all, they appealed to their followers to ignore us and keep away from our meetings. Generally speaking, this appeal was heeded. But, as time went on, more and more of their followers gradually found their way to us and accepted our teaching.

Then the leaders became nervous and, uneasy. They clung to their belief

that such a development should not be ignored forever, and that force must be applied in order to put an end to it.

Appeals were then made to the ‘class-conscious proletariat’ to attend our meetings in masses and strike with the clenched hand of the proletarian at the representatives of a ‘monarchist and reactionary agitation.’

Our meetings suddenly became packed with work-people fully three-quarters of an hour before the proceedings were scheduled to begin. These gatherings resembled a powder cask ready to explode at any moment, and the fuse was conveniently at hand.

But things always turned out differently. People came as enemies and left, not perhaps prepared to join us, yet in a reflective mood and disposed to examine critically the correctness of their own doctrine.

Gradually, as time went on, my three-hour lectures resulted in supporters and opponents becoming, united in one single enthusiastic group of people. Every signal for the breaking up of the meeting failed.

The result was that the opposition leaders became more frightened and once again looked for help from those quarters that had formerly discountenanced these tactics and, with some show of right, had been of the opinion that on principle the workers should be forbidden to attend our meetings.

Thereafter, they did not come any more, or only in small numbers, but after a short time the whole game began again. The instructions to keep away from us were ignored, the comrades came in steadily increasing numbers, until finally the advocates of the radical tactics won the day.

We were to be broken up. Yet when, after two, three and even many meetings, it was realised that to break up these gatherings was easier said than done and that every meeting resulted in a decisive weakening of the Red, fighting forces, the other cry was taken up again, ‘Proletarians and comrades, avoid the meetings of the National Socialist agitators.’

The same eternally alternating tactics were also to be observed in the Red press. At one time they tried to silence us, but discovered the uselessness of such an attempt. After that they swung round to the opposite tactics. Daily ‘reference’ was made to us solely for the purpose of ridiculing us in the eyes of the working classes.

After a time these gentlemen must have felt that no harm was being done to us, but that, on the contrary, we were reaping an advantage in that people were asking themselves why so much space was being devoted to a subject which was supposed to be so futile.

People became curious. Suddenly, there was a change of tactics and for a time we were treated as veritable criminals against mankind.

One article followed another, in which our criminal intentions were explained and fresh proofs brought forward in support of what was said.

Scandalous tales, all of them fabricated from start to finish, were published in order to help to poison the public mind, but in a short time even these attacks also proved unavailing and in fact they were of material assistance to us because they attracted public attention to us.

In those days I took up the standpoint that it was immaterial whether they laughed at us or reviled us, whether they depicted us as fools or criminals; the important point was that they took notice of us and that in the eyes of the working classes we came to be regarded as the only force capable of putting up a fight.

I said that we would one day show the rabble that was the Jewish press what we really were and what we were really aiming at.

One reason why they never got so far as breaking up our meetings was undoubtedly the incredible cowardice displayed by the leaders of the opposition.

On every critical occasion they left the dirty work to the smaller fry whilst they waited outside the halls for the results of the break-up.

We were nearly always well-informed of our opponents' intentions, not only because we allowed several of our party colleagues to remain members of the Red organisations for reasons of expediency, but also because the Red wire-pullers, were, most luckily for us, afflicted with a degree of talkativeness that is still unfortunately very prevalent among Germans.

They could not keep their own counsel, and more often than not they started cackling before the proverbial egg was laid. Hence, time and again, we were able to take such far-reaching precautionary measures that the 'Reds' who had been told off to break up our meeting had no inkling that they were

about to be ejected.

This state of affairs compelled us to take the work of safeguarding our meetings into our own hands. No reliance could be placed on the protection of the authorities, on the contrary, experience showed that it was the disturbing element which gained by such intervention. The only real outcome of police intervention was that the meeting would be dissolved, which was precisely what our opponents wanted. Generally speaking, this led the police to adopt a method of procedure which, to say the least of it, was a most infamous example of official malpractice.

The moment they received information of a threat that some meeting was to be broken up, instead of arresting the would-be disturbers, they promptly forbade the non-guilty party to hold the meeting, this being a measure which appealed to the average police mentality as the climax of wisdom. This step the police proclaimed to be a 'precautionary measure in the interests of law and order.'

The political work and activities of decent people could, therefore, always be hindered by any desperate ruffians who had the means at their disposal.

In the name of law and order State authority bowed down to these ruffians and demanded that others should not provoke them.

When the National Socialists desired to hold meetings in certain places and the trade-unions declared that their members would resist, then it was not the blackmailers that were arrested and gaoled.

On the contrary, our meetings were forbidden by the police. In fact, the strong arm of the law had the unspeakable impudence to advise us in writing to this effect on innumerable occasions.

To avoid such eventualities it was necessary to see to it that every attempt to disturb a meeting was nipped in the bud.

Another feature to be taken into account in this respect is that all meetings which rely on police protection must necessarily bring discredit to their promoters in the eyes of the general public.

Meetings that can be held only with the protective assistance of a strong force of police convert nobody, because in order to win over the lower strata

of the people there must be a visible show of strength on one's own side.

In the same way that a man of courage will win a woman's affection more easily than a coward, so a fearless movement will be more successful in winning the hearts of a people than a weak movement which relies on police support for its very existence.

It is for this latter reason in particular that our young Party had to assume the full responsibility of safeguarding its own existence, defending itself and foiling the terrorist tactics of its opponents.

The measures adopted for the protection of our meetings were as follows: Firstly, energetic and judicious conduct of the meeting.

Secondly, the organisation of a squad of men to maintain order. In those days, we and no one else were masters of the situation at our meetings, and on no occasion did we fail to emphasise this.

Our opponents fully realised that any provocation would be a signal to have them thrown out of the hall at once whatever the odds against us. At meetings, particularly outside Munich, we had in those days from five to eight hundred opponents to fifteen or sixteen National Socialists; yet we brooked no interference for our opponents knew full well that we were prepared to die rather than capitulate.

More than once a handful of party members offered a heroic resistance to a raging and violent mob of Reds. Those fifteen or twenty men would certainly have been overwhelmed in the end had not the opponents known that three or four times as many of themselves would first get their skulls cracked, and that risk they were not willing to run.

We had done our best to study the Marxist and bourgeois methods of conducting meetings, and we had certainly learnt something.

The Marxists had always exercised a most rigid discipline so that the question of breaking up their meetings could never have originated in bourgeois quarters.

The more, therefore, did the Reds concentrate on these tactics. In time they not only became past masters in this art, but in certain large districts of the Reich they went so far as to declare that non-Marxist meetings were nothing less than a cause of provocation to the proletariat.

This was particularly the case when the wire-pullers suspected that a meeting might call attention to their own transgressions and thus expose their own treachery and chicanery.

Therefore, the moment such a meeting was announced, a howl of rage went up from the Red press. They, who despised the law on principle, nearly always appealed in the first instance to the authorities and requested in imperative and threatening language that this ‘provocation of the proletariat’ be stopped forthwith in the ‘interests of law and order.’

Their language was chosen according to the importance of the official blockhead with whom they were dealing and thus success was assured.

If by chance the official happened to be a true German—and not a mere figurehead—and he did not comply with the impudent request, then the well-known appeal to stop ‘provocation of the proletariat’ was issued together with instructions to attend such and such a meeting on a certain date in full strength for the purpose of ‘putting a stop to the disgraceful machinations of the bourgeoisie by means of the proletarian fist.’

The pitiful and frightened manner in which these bourgeois meetings were conducted had to be seen to be believed. Very frequently these threats were sufficient to make them call off such a meeting at once.

The feeling of fear was so marked that the meeting, instead of commencing at eight o’clock, very seldom opened before a quarter to nine or nine o’clock.

The chairman thereupon did his best, by showering compliments on the ‘gentlemen of the opposition’ to prove how he and all others present were pleased (a palpable lie) to welcome the presence of men who were not as yet in sympathy with them, for the reason that only by mutual discussion (to which he hereby gave his consent) could they be brought closer together in mutual understanding.

Apart from this the chairman also assured them that the meeting had no intention whatsoever of interfering with anybody’s professed conviction. Far from it. Everyone had the right to form and hold his own political views, but he should allow others to do likewise.

He, therefore, requested that the speaker be allowed to deliver his speech without interruption—the speech in any case not being a long affair—

so that this meeting should not provide the world with the spectacle of yet another shameful instance of the bitter fraternal strife raging in Germany. And so on and so forth.

The brethren of the Left had little, if any, sympathy with that sort of talk; the speaker had hardly commenced when he was shouted down. One gained the impression at times that these speakers were grateful to the Fate which peremptorily cut short their martyr-like discourse.

These bourgeois toreadors left the arena amidst a vast uproar, that is to say, if they escaped being thrown down the stairs with cracked skulls, as was very often the case.

Therefore, our methods of organisation at National Socialist meetings were something quite strange to the Marxists. They came to our meetings in the belief that the little game which they had so often played successfully could, as a matter of course, be repeated on us.

‘To-day we shall finish them off.’ How often did they bawl this out to each other on entering the meeting hall, only to be thrown out with lightning speed before they had time to repeat it!

In the first place, our method of conducting a meeting was entirely different. We did not crave permission to be allowed to speak, and we did not straightaway give everybody the right to hold endless discussions.

We curtly gave everyone to understand that we were masters of the meeting and that we could, therefore, do as we pleased and that everyone who dared to interrupt would be unceremoniously thrown out.

We stated clearly our refusal to accept responsibility for anyone treated in this manner. If time permitted, and if it suited us, a discussion would take place. Party member so-and-so would now speak.

That kind of talk was sufficient in itself to astonish the Marxists.

Secondly, we had at our disposal a well-trained and organised body of men for maintaining order at our meetings.

On the other hand, the bourgeois parties protected their meetings with a body of men better classified as ushers who, by virtue of their age, thought they were entitled to authority and respect, but as the Marxist-taught mob had no

respect either for age or authority, protective measures at the bourgeois meetings were practically non-existent.

When our political meetings first started I made it a special point to organise a suitable defensive squad composed, as a matter of principle, solely of young men.

Some of them were ex-service men who had seen active service with me. Others were young party members who, right from the start, had been trained to realise that terrorism can be combated only by terrorism, that only courageous and determined people had made a success of things in this world. Finally, they knew that we were fighting for an ideal so lofty that, it was worth the last drop of our blood.

These young men had been trained to realise that where force replaced common sense in the solution of a problem, the best means of defence was attack and that the reputation of our hall-guard squads should stamp us as a political fighting force and not as a debating society.

It was extraordinary how eagerly those boys of the war-generation responded to this order. They had indeed good reason to be bitterly disappointed and indignant at the miserable milksop methods employed by the bourgeoisie.

Thus it became clear to everyone that the Revolution had only been possible thanks to the dastardly methods of a bourgeois government.

At that time there was certainly no lack of man-power to suppress the revolution, but unfortunately there was an entire lack of an organising brain.

How often did the eyes of my young men light up with enthusiasm when I explained to them the vital functions connected with their task. I assured them time and again that all earthly wisdom is useless unless it be supported and protected by force; that the gentle goddess of Peace can only walk in company with the god of War; and that every great measure performed in the name of Peace must be protected and furthered by means of force.

In this way the idea of military service appeared to them in a far more realistic light—not in the fossilised sense of decrepit officials serving the dead authority of a dead State—but in the living realisation of the duty of each man to sacrifice his life for his country at any given time and in any given place.

All honour to those young men for the way in which they performed their duty! Like a swarm of hornets they tackled disturbers at our meetings, regardless of superiority of numbers, however great, indifferent to wounds and bloodshed, inspired with the great idea of blazing a trail for the sacred mission of our Movement.

As early as the summer of 1920 the organisation of squads of men as hall-guards for the purpose of maintaining order at our meetings was gradually assuming definite shape.

By the spring of 1921 this body of men was sectioned off into squads of one hundred which, in turn, were subdivided into smaller groups. The urgency for this was apparent, as meanwhile the number of our meetings had steadily increased.

We still frequently met in the Munich Hofbräuhaus, but more frequently in larger meeting halls throughout the city. In the autumn and winter of 1920–21 our meetings in the Burgerbrau and Münchener-Kindl-Keller had assumed vast proportions and the same thing always happened, namely, that the National Socialist German Labour Party meetings were always crowded out so that the police were compelled to close and bar the doors long before the proceedings commenced.

The organisation of hall-guards to keep order at our meetings cleared up a very difficult question. Up till then the Movement had possessed no party badge and no party flag.

The lack of these tokens was not only a disadvantage at that time, but was bound to prove intolerable in the future. The disadvantages were chiefly that members of the Party possessed no outward token of membership which linked them together and it was absolutely unthinkable that for the future they should remain without some token which would be a symbol of the Movement and could be set against that of the International.

More than once in my youth the psychological importance of such a symbol had become clearly evident to me and from a sentimental point of view also it was advisable.

In Berlin, after the War, I was present at a mass demonstration of Marxists in the Lustgarten in front of the Royal Palace. A sea of red flags, red armlets and red flowers was in itself sufficient to give that huge assembly of

about one hundred and twenty thousand persons an outward appearance of strength.

I was now able to feel and understand how easily the man in the street succumbs to the hypnotic magic of such a grandiose piece of theatrical demonstration.

The bourgeoisie, which, politically speaking, neither possessed nor championed any *Weltanschauung*, had, therefore, no banner of its own. Its parties were composed of 'patriots' who appropriated the colours of the Reich.

Had these colours been the symbol of a definite *Weltanschauung* then one could understand the rulers of the State regarding this flag as expressive of their own *Weltanschauung*, seeing that through their efforts the symbol of their *Weltanschauung* had become the emblem of the Reich.

This was, however, not the case. The Reich was welded together without the aid of the German bourgeoisie and the flag itself was born of the War and was, therefore, merely a State emblem possessing no significance in the sense of any particular ideological mission.

Only in one part of the German-speaking territory in German Austria was there anything like a bourgeois party flag in existence. Here a section of the national bourgeoisie selected the 1848 colours (black, red and gold) as their party flag and then they created a symbol which, though of no significance from the point of view of a *Weltanschauung*, had, nevertheless, a revolutionary character from a national political point of view.

The most bitter opponents of this flag at that time (and this should not be forgotten to-day) were the Social Democrats and the Christian Socialists or the clergy.

They it was, in particular, who degraded and besmirched these colours just as in 1918 they dragged black, white and red in the gutter. Of course, the black, red and gold of the German parties in the old Austria were the colours of the year 1848; that is to say, of a period likely to be regarded as somewhat visionary, but it was a period that had honest Germans as its representatives, although the Jews were lurking unseen as wire-pullers in the background.

It was the act of high treason and the shameful bartering of the German people and German territory that first of all made these colours so attractive to

the Marxists and the Centre Party; so much so, that to-day they revere them as their most cherished possession and found their own associations for the protection of the flag they once foully besmirched.

It is a fact, therefore, that, up to 1920, there was no flag that could have stood for a *Weltanschauung* diametrically opposed to Marxism.

For even if the better political elements among the German bourgeoisie were loath to accept the suddenly discovered black, red and gold colours as their symbol after the year 1918, they were nevertheless incapable of countering this with a programme of their own for the future. At last, they had a reconstruction of the old Reich in mind.

It is to this way of thinking that the black, white and red colours of the old Reich are indebted for their resurrection as the flag of our so-called national bourgeois parties.

It is obvious that the emblem of a regime which had been, overthrown by the Marxists in inglorious circumstances is not now worthy to serve as a banner under which the same Marxism is to be crushed in its turn.

However much any honourable German may love and revere those old colours, glorious in their youthful freshness, if he has fought under them and seen the sacrifice of so many lives; they can never serve as an emblem for the struggle of the future.

In our Movement I have always adopted the attitude that it was a really lucky thing for the German nation that it had lost its old flag. This attitude of mine was in strong contrast to that of the bourgeois politicians.

It may be immaterial to us what the Republic does under its flag, but let us be deeply grateful to Fate for having so graciously spared the most glorious war flag of all time from becoming an ignominious rag. The Reich of to-day, which has sold itself and its people, must never be allowed to adopt the honourable and heroic black, white and red colours. As long as the November outrage endures, that outrage may continue to bear its own external sign and not steal that of an honourable past. Our bourgeois politicians should awaken their consciences to the fact that whoever desires this State to adopt the black, white and red colours is pilfering the past.

The old flag was suitable only for the old Reich and, thank Heaven, the Republic chose the colours best suited to itself.

This was also the reason why we National Socialists recognised that to hoist the old colours would not be symbolic of our special aims, for we had no wish to resurrect from the dead the old Reich which had been ruined through its own blunders, but to build up a new State.

The Movement which is fighting Marxism to-day along these lines must display on its banner the symbol of the new State.

The question of the new flag, that is to say, the form and appearance it must take, gave us much food for thought in those days.

Suggestions poured in from all sides, which although well-meant were not suitable. The new flag had not only to be a symbol expressing our own struggle but, on the other hand, it was necessary that it should prove effective as a large poster.

All those who have to consider the tastes of the public will recognise and appreciate the great importance of these apparently petty details.

In hundreds of thousands of cases a really striking emblem may be the first thing to awaken interest in a movement. For this reason we declined all suggestions from various quarters for the identification of our Movement, by means of a white flag, with the old State or rather with those decrepit parties whose sole political objective was the restoration of past conditions.

Apart from this, white is not a colour capable of attracting and focussing public attention. It is a colour suitable only for temperance associations and not for a movement that stands for reform in a revolutionary period.

Black was also suggested—certainly well-suited to the times, but embodying no significance expressive of the will behind our Movement. Moreover, black is incapable of attracting attention.

White and blue were discarded, despite their admirable aesthetic appeal as being the colours of an individual German federal state—a state that, unfortunately, through its political attitude of particularist narrow-mindedness did not enjoy a good reputation.

In addition, with these colours it would have been difficult to attract attention to our Movement. The same applies to black and white. Black, red and gold did not come into consideration; neither, for the reasons already mentioned, did black, white and red—at least not in the form hitherto in use.

But the effectiveness of these three colours is far superior to all others and they are certainly the most strikingly harmonious combination.

I myself was always for keeping the old colours, not only because I, as a soldier, regarded them as my most sacred possession, but because in their aesthetic effect they are, more than any others, symbolic of my personal sentiments.

Accordingly, I had to discard all the innumerable suggestions and designs which had been proposed for the new Movement, among which were many that had incorporated the swastika in a design with the old colours.

I, as leader, was unwilling to make public my own design, as it was possible that someone else would come forward with a design just as good, if not better, than my own.

As a matter of fact, a dental surgeon from Starnberg submitted a good design very similar to mine, with only one mistake, namely, that upon a white ground he set a swastika with curved limbs.

After innumerable trials I decided upon a final form—a flag of red material with a white disc bearing in its centre a black swastika. After many attempts I obtained the correct proportions between the dimensions of the flag and that of the white central disc, as well as of the swastika. This design was finally adopted.

At the same time, we immediately ordered corresponding armlets for our squad of men who kept order at meetings, armlets of red material bearing a white disc with the black swastika upon it.

A party badge was designed on the same lines, namely, a white disc on a red ground bearing the swastika in the centre. Herr Fuss, a Munich goldsmith, supplied the first practical and permanent design for this.

The new flag made its first appearance in public in the summer of 1920. It suited out Movement admirably, both being new and young. Not a soul had seen this flag before and its effect at that time was something akin to that of a flaming torch.

We ourselves experienced almost a boyish thrill when one of the women-members of the Party who had been entrusted with the making of the flag finally handed it over to us.

A few months later we in Munich possessed six of these flags. The steadily increasing strength of our hall-guards was a main factor in popularizing the symbol, for it, became a symbol in the truest sense of the word.

By incorporating those colours, dear to every one of us, which had once gained so much honour for the German nation it bore testimony to our reverence for the past and was at the same time symbolic of the Movement's aims.

Our nationalist and socialist programme was made manifest in our flag. The red expressed the social thought underlying the Movement, white the national thought, and the swastika signified the mission allotted to us—the struggle for the victory of Aryan mankind and at the same time the triumph of the ideal of creative work which in itself is, and always will be, anti-Semitic.

Two years later, when our squad of hall-guards had long since grown into storm detachments, it seemed necessary to give this defensive organisation of a young *Weltanschauung* a particular symbol of victory, namely, a standard.

I also designed this and entrusted, the execution of it to an old party comrade, Herr Gahr, who was a goldsmith. Ever since that time this standard has been the distinctive emblem of the National Socialist struggle.

The increasing interest taken in our meetings, particularly during 1920, compelled us at times to hold two meetings a week.

Crowds gathered round our posters, the large meeting-halls in the town were always filled and tens of thousands of people, who had been led astray by the teachings of Marxism, found their way back to the national community to assist in the work of fighting for the liberation of the Reich.

The public in Munich had got to know us. We were being talked about. The term 'National Socialist' had become common property to many and signified for them a definite party programme.

Our circle of supporters and even of members was constantly increasing, so that in the winter of 1920–21 we were able to appear as a strong party in Munich.

At that time there was no party in Munich, with the exception of the Marxist parties, and certainly no nationalist party which was able to hold such

mass demonstrations as ours. The Münchner-Kindl-Keller, which held five thousand people, was more than once overcrowded and up till then there was only one other hall, the Circus Krone, which we had not yet ventured to hire.

At the end of January 1921 there was again great cause for anxiety in Germany. The Paris Agreement, by which Germany pledged herself to pay the crazy sum of a hundred milliard gold marks, was to be confirmed by the London Treaty.

Thereupon an well-established Munich co-operative association, representative of so-called *völkisch* groups, deemed it advisable to call a public meeting of protest.

I became nervous and restless when I saw that a lot of time was being wasted and nothing achieved. At first a meeting was suggested in the Königsplatz; on second thoughts this proposal was turned down, as someone feared the proceedings might be wrecked by Red elements.

Another suggestion was a demonstration in front of the Feldherrnhalle, but this also came to nothing. Finally, a combined meeting in the Münchner-Kindl-Keller was suggested. Meanwhile day after day went by; the parties entirely ignored the terrible event and the cooperative association could not decide on a definite date for holding the demonstration.

On Tuesday, February 1st, I put forward an urgent demand for a final decision. I was told I should be given it on Wednesday. On that day I demanded to be told clearly, if and when, the meeting was to take place.

The reply was again uncertain and evasive, it being stated that it was 'intended' to arrange a demonstration for that day week. At that I lost all patience and decided to conduct a meeting of protest on my own.

At noon on Wednesday I dictated in ten minutes the text of the poster and at the same time hired the Circus Krone for the next day, February 3rd.

In those days this was a tremendous venture, not only because of the uncertainty of filling that vast hall, but also because of the risk of the meeting being broken up.

Numerically, our squad of hall-guards was not strong enough for this vast hall. I was also uncertain about what to do in case the meeting was broken up, as I imagined it would be more difficult to deal with that contingency, in the

huge circus building than in an ordinary meeting hall.

But events showed that my fears were misplaced, the opposite being the case. In that vast building a band of men bent on breaking up the meeting could be tackled and subdued more easily than in crowded halls.

One thing was certain—a failure would throw us back for a long time to come. If one meeting were broken up our prestige would be seriously injured and our opponents would be encouraged to repeat their success.

That would lead to sabotage of our work in connection with further meetings and months of difficult struggle would be necessary to overcome this.

We had only one day in which to post our bills, Thursday.

Unfortunately it rained during the morning of that day and there was reason to fear that many people would prefer to remain at home rather than hurry to a meeting through rain and snow, especially when there was likely to be violence and bloodshed.

Indeed on that Thursday morning I was suddenly struck by the fear that the hall might never be filled to capacity, which would have made me ridiculous in the eyes of the co-operative association.

I therefore immediately dictated various leaflets and had them printed and distributed in the afternoon. Of course, they contained an invitation to attend the meeting.

Two lorries which I hired were draped as much as possible in red, each had our new flag hoisted on it and was then ‘manned’ by fifteen or twenty members of our Party.

Orders were given to the members to canvas the streets thoroughly, distribute leaflets and conduct propaganda for the mass meeting to be held that evening. It was the first time that lorries had driven through the streets bearing flags and not manned by Marxists. The public stared open-mouthed at these red-draped cars, and in the outlying districts clenched fists were angrily raised at this new evidence of ‘provocation of the proletariat.’

Were not the Marxists the only ones entitled to hold meetings and drive about in motor-lorries?

By seven o’clock in the evening the circus hall was by no means full. I

was being kept informed by telephone every ten minutes and was becoming uneasy.

Usually at seven or a quarter past our meeting-halls were already half-filled and sometimes even packed, but I soon discovered the cause of this.

I had entirely forgotten to take into account the huge dimensions of this new meeting-place. A thousand people in the Hofbräuhaus was quite an impressive sight, but the same number in the Circus building was swallowed up in its vastness and was hardly noticeable.

Shortly afterwards I received more hopeful reports and at a quarter to eight I was informed that the hall was three-quarters full, with huge crowds still lined up at the pay-boxes. I then left for the meeting.

I arrived at the Circus building at two minutes past eight. There was still a crowd outside, composed partly of inquisitive people and among them many opponents who preferred to wait outside for developments.

When I entered the great hall I felt the same joy I had felt a year previously at the first meeting in the Festsaal of the Münchener Hofbrauhaus; but it was not until I had forced my way through the solid wall of people and reached the platform that I perceived the full measure of our success.

The hall was before me, like a huge shell packed with thousands upon thousands of people. Even the arena was densely crowded. More than five thousand six hundred tickets had been sold and, allowing for the unemployed, poor students and our own detachments of men for keeping order, a crowd of about six thousand five hundred must have been present.

My theme was, 'Future or Downfall' and I was filled with joy at the conviction that the future was represented by the crowd that I was addressing.

I began, and spoke for about two and a half hours. I had the feeling after the first half-hour that the meeting was going to be a big success. Contact had at once been established with all those thousands of individuals.

After the first hour the speech was already being received by spontaneous outbursts of applause, but after the second hour this died down to a solemn stillness which I was to experience so often later on in this same hall and which will be for-ever remembered by all those present.

Nothing broke, this impressive silence and only when the last word had been spoken did the meeting give vent to its feelings by singing the national anthem. I watched the scene during the next twenty minutes, as the vast hall slowly emptied itself, and only then did I leave the platform, a happy man, and make my way home.

Photographs were taken of this first meeting in the Circus Krone in Munich. They are more eloquent than words in demonstrating the success of this meeting. The bourgeois papers reproduced photographs and reported the meeting as having been merely 'nationalist' in character-in their usual modest fashion they omitted all mention of its promoters.

Thus we had, for the first time, far exceeded the limits of an ordinary party. We could now no longer be ignored, and to dispel all doubt that the meeting was merely an isolated success, I immediately arranged for another at the Circus Krone in the following week, with the same results.

Once more the vast hall was filled to overflowing; so much so that I decided to hold a third meeting in the same hall during the following week, and yet a third time the immense building was filled with people.

After these initial successes early in 1921 I increased our activity in Munich still further. I not only held meetings once a week, but often twice a week and very often during the summer and autumn as many as three meetings were held every week.

We met regularly at the Circus Hall and it gave us great satisfaction to see that every meeting brought us the same measure of success.

The result was shown in an ever-growing number of supporters and an increase in the number of party members.

Naturally the news of our success did not allow our opponents to sleep soundly. At first their tactics fluctuated between the use of terrorist tactics and silence. But as they were forced to realise that neither terrorism nor silence could hinder the progress of our Movement, they had recourse to a supreme act of terrorism which was intended to put a definite end to our activities as regards the holding of meetings.

As a pretext for action along this line they took advantage of a mysterious attack on one of the Landtag deputies, named Erhard Auer. It was declared that someone had fired several shots at this man one evening, that is

to say, he was not actually hit, but an attempt had been made to shoot him.

Fabulous presence of mind and heroic courage on the part of the Social Democratic leader not only foiled this dastardly attempt on his life, but also put the crazy would-be assassins to flight.

They were so quick and fled so far that subsequently the police could not find even the slightest traces of them. This mysterious episode was used by the organ of the Social Democratic Party to arouse public feeling against the Movement and at the same time it delivered its old rigmarole about what was to happen in the near future. They would see to it that the proletariat would intervene in time and prevent us from flourishing like the green bay-tree. A few days later the real attack came. It was decided finally to interrupt one of our meetings which was billed to, take place in the Münchener Hofbräuhaus and at which I myself was to speak.

On November 4th, 1921, between six and seven o'clock in the evening, I received the first definite news that the meeting would positively be broken up and that to carry out this action our adversaries had decided to send to the meeting large numbers of workmen employed in certain 'Red' factories.

It was due to an unfortunate accident that we did not receive this news sooner. On that day, we had given up our old business office in the Sternecker Gasse in Munich and moved into other premises; or rather we had given-up the old offices and our new quarters were not yet in functioning order.

The telephone had already been cut off in the old office and had not yet been installed in the new one. Hence it happened that several attempts to inform us by telephone of the break-up which had been planned for that evening failed.

Consequently our hall-guards were not present in strength at that meeting. There was only one squad present, which did not consist of the usual one hundred men, but only of about forty-six, and our machinery for giving the alarm was not yet sufficiently perfect for us to be able to collect within the space of an hour a sufficient number of guards to deal with the situation.

It must also be added that on several previous occasions we had been forewarned, but nothing unusual had happened. The old saying that revolutions which are predicted seldom take place had hitherto proved true in our case.

Possibly this was an additional reason why sufficient precautions had

not been taken on that day to cope with the brutal determination of our opponents to break up our meeting.

Finally, we did not believe that the Hofbräuhaus in Munich was suitable for the interruptive tactics of our adversaries. We had feared such a thing far more in the bigger halls, especially in the Circus Krone, but on this point we were to learn a very serviceable lesson on that evening.

Later, we studied this whole question scientifically and arrived at conclusions, both interesting and incredible, which were afterwards of fundamental importance in determining the organisation and tactics of our Storm Troops.

When I arrived at the entrance hall of the Hofbräuhaus at 7:45 p.m. that evening, I realised that there could be no doubt as to what the Reds intended.

The hall was filled, and for that reason the police had barred the entrances. Our adversaries, who had arrived very early, were in the hall, and our followers were, for the most part, outside.

The small bodyguard of S.A. men awaited me at the entrance. I had the doors leading to the principal hall closed and then asked the bodyguard of forty-five or forty-six men to come forward.

I made it clear to them that perhaps on that evening they would for the first time have to show their unbending and unbreakable loyalty to the Movement and that not one of us must leave the hall unless he were carried out dead.

I added that I would remain in the hall and that I did not believe that one of them would abandon me, and that if I saw any one of them act the coward I myself would personally tear off his armlet and his badge.

I demanded of them that they should come forward if the slightest attempt were made to sabotage the meeting and that they must remember that the best defence is always attack.

I was answered with a triple 'Heil' which sounded more hoarse and enthusiastic than usual.

Then I advanced through the hall and could take in the situation with my own eyes. Our opponents sat close together and tried to pierce me with their

looks. Innumerable pairs of eyes glowing with hatred and rage were fixed on me, while others with sneering faces greeted me with shouts and threats to the effect that they would 'settle our hash', that we should 'look out for ourselves' and that they would 'stop our mouths once and for all', along with other expressions of an equally elegant character.

They knew that they were superior in numbers and they acted accordingly. Yet we were able to open the meeting, and I began to speak. In the hall of the Hofbräuhaus I always stood against one of the side walls and my platform was a beer table. Therefore I was always right in the midst of the audience.

Perhaps this circumstance was responsible for creating a certain atmosphere which I never sensed elsewhere.

Before me, and especially towards my left, there were only opponents, seated or standing. They were mostly robust youths and men from the Maffei Factory, from Kustermann's, from the Isaria meter works, etc.

Along the left-hand wall of the hall they had pushed their way close to my table and now began to collect beer-mugs, that is to say, they ordered one beer after another and placed the empty mugs under the tables.

In this way they succeeded in collecting whole batteries of ammunition, and no one would have been more surprised than I, had the meeting passed off quietly.

In spite of all the interruptions, I was able to speak for about an hour and a half and I began to feel that I was master of the situation.

Even the ringleaders among the disturbers appeared to be convinced of this, for they steadily became more uneasy, often left the hall, returned and spoke to their men in an obviously nervous way.

A small psychological error which I committed in replying to an interruption, a mistake of which I myself was conscious the moment the words had left my mouth, gave the sign for the outbreak.

There were a few furiously angry shouts and all in a moment a man jumped on a seat and shouted 'Liberty!'

At that signal the champions of liberty began their work.

In a few moments the hall was filled with a yelling shrieking mob. Numerous beer-mugs flew like shells above their heads. Amid this din, one heard the crash of chair legs, the crashing of mugs, shouts, yells and screams.

It was a mad uproar and I should just like to have seen such a scene enacted at a bourgeois meeting. I stood where I was and could observe my men doing their duty, every one of them.

The fun had hardly begun when my Storm Troops, as they were called from that day onwards, launched their attack. Like wolves they threw themselves on the enemy again and again, in parties of eight or ten and began steadily to drive them out of the hall.

After five minutes I could see hardly one of them that was not streaming with blood. Then I realised what kind of men many of them were, above all my brave Maurice and Hess, who is my private secretary to-day, and many others who, even though seriously wounded, returned to the attack again and again, as long as they could stand on their feet.

Pandemonium reigned for some twenty minutes and by that time our opponents, who had numbered seven or eight hundred, had been driven from the hall or hurled out headlong by my men, who had not numbered fifty.

Only, in the left corner a big crowd was still standing out against our men and putting up a stiff fight. Then two pistol-shots rang out from the entrance to the hall and immediately wild shooting broke out on all sides. One's heart almost rejoiced at this spectacle which recalled memories of the War.

At that moment it was not possible to identify the persons who had fired the shots, but at any rate I could see that my men had returned to the attack with increased fury, until finally the last disturbers were overcome and flung out of the hall.

About twenty-five minutes had passed since it all began. The hall looked as if a bomb had exploded there.

Many of my comrades were being bandaged and others were being taken away, but we remained masters of the situation. Hermann Esser, who was chairman of the meeting, announced, 'The meeting will continue. The speaker will proceed.' So I went on with my speech.

When we ourselves had declared the meeting at an end, an excited police officer rushed in, waved his arms and declared, 'The meeting is dissolved.'

I could not help laughing at this example of the law's delay. It was typical of the officiousness of the police. The more insignificant they are, the more important they try to appear.

That evening taught us many a lesson and our adversaries never forgot the lesson they had received.

Up to the autumn of 1923 the *Münchener Post* did not again threaten us with the clenched fist of the proletariat.

