

The Mouse that Roared? Pro-Nazi Resistance in U.S.-Occupied Germany, 1945-49: A
View from the American Archives

Supervisor: Dr. Perry Biddiscombe by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of


MASTER OF ARTS


In the Department of History

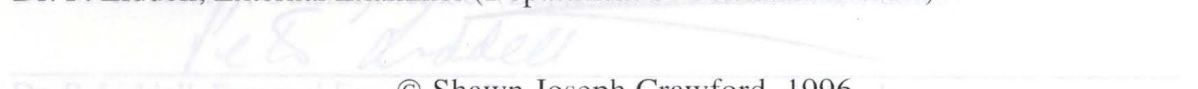
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ABSTRACT

This thesis entails an examination of pro-Nazi activity in post-World War Two Germany in the U.S. zone of occupation (1945-49). The thesis explores the prevalence and historical significance of pro-Nazi resistance. This investigation comprised the use of declassified U.S. military and intelligence documents from the American occupation, as well as secondary literature. The thesis concludes that there were significant underground pro-Nazi groups, ranging from those operating “underground railways” for escaping Nazis, to well-organized groups planning to resurrect Nazi Germany. If unchecked, some groups would have posed a threat to the democratic future of Germany, however, the most dangerous conspiracies were crushed by the Allies. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that the prosperity of democratic West Germany in the 1950s, along with the infamy of the Nazi legacy, effectively closed any window of opportunity that these pro-Nazi groups had during the occupation.

32. Chapter
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography

Numerous historical accounts of the horrors of Nazi Germany and the legacy of the Hitler regime have been written during the last fifty years. Up to and including today, Germany has been held up to suspicion in many quarters, the source of a pervading fear that the particular mix of customs, habits and historical elements that originally gave birth to National Socialism have still not changed. Many books have been written, many conferences have been convened and many analysts have struggled with the issue of Germany and the "German question", i.e., whether Nazism was an aberration or an indication of something deeper within the collective German psyche (if there could ever truly be a "national psyche" of any kind). Most scholars deal with this issue strictly by observing the events of 1933-45 and earlier, and have not based their discussion on concrete post-war evidence. If one is to analyze accurately any remaining desire for Nazism among segments of the German population, one must, among other things, look at the actual existence and relative popularity of radical right-wing groups in post-war Germany.

The historiography of post-war Nazism offers a significant body of work. Kurt Tauber, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Douglas Botting and Rand C. Lewis number among the writers who have examined the various manifestations of Nazi activity after the war. Significantly, the primary areas of focus for these authors - and indeed for most historians or political scientists writing on this issue - were the politicization of old Nazis (e.g., the forming of new political parties), the maintenance of their bureaucratic and financial strength, and the escape of wanted Nazi war criminals. Historiographically, however, the issue of post-war pro-Nazi resistance groups in Germany is most fascinating, for there appears to be little if any analysis of this topic. This absence of discussion provided the impetus for my work.

There is an important reason for investigating and analyzing radical rightist groups during the period 1945-1949, when the memories of Nazism's brutality and its failures were strongest. One cannot adequately ascertain the deepest appeal of an idea or

movement unless one looks at particular aspects of its appeal after the ideal has been generally and thoroughly discredited. In other words, any residual Nazism or Nazi fanaticism in Germany after 1945 was, at first glance, surprising, for the Nazi ideal had led Germany to complete ruin, humiliation and helplessness, both physically - as manifested in the rubble of the once-powerful Reich - and psychologically. On the face of it, one would expect Nazism to have been completely discredited and indeed reviled for having plunged Germany into this position. Unlike the situation at the end of the First World War, no one could claim that a strong German military force occupying foreign territory had been betrayed by conspirators at home. By 1945 total war had led to total destruction both of the military and of the home front. Simply put, there were no illusions.

A focus on extremist pro-Nazi activity in the American zone of occupation provides a useful strategy to determine the tenacity of Nazism. The U.S. zone was chosen for this study because of the unique historical experiment of denazification and reeducation underway there, at least on the surface. The world's most powerful democracy was attempting to shape and mould the traditionally authoritarian Bismarckian/Hitlerite Reich into a democratic state. Included in this process was an overt commitment to the purging of Nazi organizations and ideas. On the surface, the U.S. seemed more committed to denazification than the British. Thus, any radical pro-Nazi activity in the face of a virulently anti-Nazi occupying force was most likely to come to light and stand out in the U.S. zone. It is for these reasons (U.S. power, the original commitment to denazification) that the U.S. experience provides a more reliable measure than its British counterpart as a focal point of analysis. I have passed over the French zone for similar reasons. The Soviet zone is equally fascinating, but the relative difficulty of obtaining accurate documentation makes a case study of that area problematic.

The term "Nazi" requires clear definition at the outset, as it is all-too frequently used loosely. Some hold the term to include all Nazi officials and supporters during the regime, including those who (after 1945) wished to avoid all references to their past.

Others hold the term to include those who were Nazis before 1939, 1936, 1933 or some other date of the sort that was used to group people easily (and often erroneously) into readily identifiable categories. Still others include groups and organizations that pursued a goal of maintaining and/or restoring radical right-wing National Socialist ideas and policies in the Fatherland. Obviously, one must distinguish clearly between these different types: those who merely looked back to the Nazi past with nostalgia and a sense of camaraderie; those old Nazis who attempted to work through the post-war political and legal system to re-establish a semblance of Nazi ideals, while all the time disavowing any claim to being Nazis themselves; and those who engaged in violence against the U.S. Military Government as a rearguard action in the hopes of re-establishing Nazism. The primary focus of this discussion will concern the last group.

Equally in need of clear definition is the term "pro-Nazi". Merely taking part in violent action against the Military Government (MG) did not necessarily make one a Nazi or even a supporter of Nazi ideals. Some of these saboteurs, as we shall see, considered themselves German patriots, upholding the sovereignty of their Fatherland, not the rule or the relevance of National Socialism. We must make the often-delicate differentiation between being an ultra-nationalist and being a Nazi. Although ultra-nationalism was undeniably a part of the Nazi ideology, this did not necessarily mean that all ultra-nationalists were Nazis. While a person had to be a radical nationalist if he or she was to be considered a true Nazi, the reverse was not true. One immediate difference between the Nazi and the right-winger was the mystical and almost religiously fanatic devotion of the Nazis in comparison to those who merely fell under the ambiguous category of "radical right-winger." What gives one the tendency to associate many groups with the unique fanaticism of the Nazi movement is the knowledge we have of the backgrounds of many of these people. Many participants in various resistance groups, as we shall see, were taken from the ranks of the *Hitlerjugend* (HJ, or Hitler Youth). Many - but not all - of the young people in the HJ were thoroughly indoctrinated with the tenets of Nazism during what psychologists would call their

“formative years”. Among these tenets, first and foremost was absolute and complete devotion to their *Führer*. Surely the complete devotion to Hitler and the *Führerprinzip* must constitute one of the distinctions between Nazis and other radical right wingers. Perhaps most importantly, I would consider pro-Nazis and/or Nazis to include those who emphasized the *revolutionary* aspect of Nazism. The people that I term pro-Nazis actively strove to eventually reestablish some semblance of a National Socialist Germany, even in the face of Allied occupation.

Some might use the term “neo-Nazi” to describe occupation-era Nazi activists. Considering the time frame we are discussing (1945-49), it makes little sense to speak of neo-Nazis. Those individuals involved in direct action during this period could best be described as Nazis, both in the literal and the psychological sense. Many were Nazis before and leading up to 1945, and there was nothing that separated them psychologically from the Nazi period. This is quite unlike the situation today, where people who espouse Nazi beliefs and ideals usually do not follow an unbroken line from 1945 to the 1990s: they are separated generationally and circumstantially from the original Nazis (although they may have a Nazi frame of mind).

Use of the word Nazi also becomes difficult when dealing with the military (e.g., veterans’ groups) and others who served in official positions before and during the war. Also, a nominal Nazi did not necessarily make a true Nazi (i.e., a person who fervently believed in the ideas of the *Führerprinzip*. Aryan superiority, anti-semitism, ultra-nationalism, etc.), and we must further distinguish between these two categories, for we are interested in the true believers, not simply the party members. In many ways this difficulty mirrors the problems that faced U.S. denazification boards in western Germany. Ultimately it is probably more realistic to include what one might call “pro-Nazis” in any discussion of Nazi activity after the war. For the purposes of this analysis, the term pro-Nazi will be used to describe individuals who shared the Nazis’ basic assumptions about both ideology and national policy. Both emphasized militarism, racial superiority, extreme anti-semitism and the *Führerprinzip*, although pro-Nazis

perhaps differed in some minor areas from the most devout Hitlerites.

Yet another problem in this particular field involves the question of priorities. More specifically, there was a shifting of priorities within OMGUS (Office of Military Government of Germany, United States), especially by late 1947-early 1948. From the end of the war until early 1948, the greatest concern of U.S. military intelligence in Germany was the possible eruption of pro-Nazi underground resistance and the dangers that Nazi groups posed to the future of both the occupation and the stability of a self-governing Germany. By 1948 however, with the onset of the Berlin blockade, we see a dramatic shift in priorities for OMGUS intelligence. At this point the U.S. occupation authorities became almost completely absorbed with the activities - whether real or imagined - of the KPD (Communist Party) in their zone. Contemporary OMGUS, OSS and State Department files on Germany lead us to believe that infiltration by Soviet Communists became *the* overriding fear. From this time onward official documentation on extremist right wing underground terror or direct action groups virtually disappears. From late 1947 onwards, even terrorist activities that in months past would have been attributed to Nazi sympathizers were attributed to Communist or pro-Communist groups.

There were at least four options available to Nazis who had avoided immediate capture during the "Stunde Null" (Zero Hour) period. One option pursued by many was simply to ignore or dismiss their Nazi past and attempt to fit into mainstream post-war German society. What is of primary interest to me are the options pursued by the unrepentant Nazis. Three clear choices existed for these devoted Nazis who wished to remain active: direct resistance; escape to Western Europe, the Middle East or South America; and eventually, the formation of political parties. Of utmost importance is the possible existence and significance of Nazi or pro-Nazi resistance groups. This is vital in illustrating the devotion to Nazism that remained in May 1945 and beyond. The presence of such organizations served as a gauge of Nazi fanaticism and activism -as opposed to merely tacit support or sympathy for Nazism - in the U.S. zone.

There is almost nothing in the historiographical record that looks at those pro-Nazi groups who pursued the option of attempting actually to fight American rule and/or bring about the creation of a new Nazi German state. The general trend in most analyses of post-war German Nazism has been to examine the Hitler regime, followed by a look at the rise of pro-Nazi movements, political parties and tendencies in the 1950s and 60s. The period of 1945-9 has usually been ignored as a time of pro-Nazi activity, even by those (such as John Dornberg) who saw Germany as having failed to rid itself adequately of Nazi tendencies.¹ One obvious explanation of this serious historiographical gap could be that such groups and activities simply did not exist. As we shall see, this was not the case.

This issue of pro-Nazi activism and resistance during the Occupation is largely ignored by the many historians of post-war Germany. While it is obviously true that these authors specialized in different aspects of German history, one might still expect some discussion, however limited, of this issue of pro-Nazi underground resistance. Included in this number are well-known scholars such as Gordon Craig and Hermann Glaser, whose comprehensive approaches examined most aspects of German society at this time. What is even more interesting is the number of historians who have concentrated specifically on the U.S. Occupation and yet have not deemed radical right-wing resistance noteworthy enough to merit even a brief discussion. Falling into this category are authors such as John Gimbel and Norbert Frei, who admittedly are looking at this topic purely from the point of view of American goals and problems in Germany. This is a notable paradox when one considers the fact that (prior to the end of the war) U.S. officials had expected underground resistance to be among the greatest difficulties they would face. Gimbel and Frei turned most of their attention to denazification and the evolution of U.S. policy on denazification. Many historians and political scientists have tackled the issue of the effectiveness of OMGUS in relation to denazification. Edward Peterson, for example, took the view that the U.S. was divided between punishment and rehabilitation. Peterson asserted that OMGUS had ultimately little effect on

denazification, and that as a result the greatest successes came when OMGUS took no action and let Germans handle the situation. In effect, Peterson claimed that Hitler had denazified Germany through his failures and the fact that his regime had turned Germans into moral outlaws. Tom Bower saw American (and British) officials taking a passive, even laissez-faire attitude towards denazification and the pursuit of Nazi war criminals. Bower stated that the Americans were not the determined Nazi-hunters that they had made themselves out to be, and that in fact crushing the legacy of Nazism was of little concern to Allied officials. In the end however, none of these scholars focused on pro-Nazi resistance during the Occupation.²

Some historians have directed their efforts to the various Nazi special forces and partisan groups that were formed in the last year of the war for the purpose of resistance against the Allies. One of the major targets of analysis for these scholars has been the oft-mentioned Werewolf movement. Among this group of historians, James Lucas and Charles Whiting concentrated on wartime underground activity and have not looked extensively at the post-war active resistance of Nazis to occupational government. Lucas' specific area of interest was Nazi elite forces and commando operations during the war. He makes note of the various Werewolf operations during the war, as well as the organization's preparations for the post-war era, but in the end, Lucas and the others postulated that when the war ended, these groups and their plans ceased to exist.³ Lucas claimed that although there were reports of various underground civilian para-military groups springing up at the end of the war, such as the "*Freikorps* Adolf Hitler", there was little proof of any activity by such movements, and what little evidence there was pointed to a membership consisting of middle-aged men who had not fought during the war.⁴

Perry Biddiscombe and Detlev Peukert have delved into the activities of the *Edelweiss Piraten* (EP), a mysterious group known originally for its opposition to - or rather, rivalry with - the HJ, and cited later in numerous OMGUS reports as one of the major direct action resistance groups in post-war Germany. A great number of OMGUS

intelligence files named the EP as a major source of active pro-Nazi resistance to the occupation. Biddiscombe illustrates the subtle transformation of the *Piraten* over the course of time: from a decidedly non-Nazi youth gang during the war to an essentially pro-Nazi gang by 1945-6. Peukert, the eminent authority on the EP, presents it as a non-Nazi youth organization whose members physically and figuratively attacked the pretentiousness and the authoritarian air of the HJ (while at the same time displaying no significant deviation from Nazi ideals). Peukert has suggested that the EP were averse to the stifling authoritarianism of Hitler's regime, but not necessarily to the basic ideals and values of Nazism. In fact, Biddiscombe sees the *Piraten* at the end of the war as a covert, shadowy group which drew a sizable number of Nazis and HJ under its banner as a means of resisting the occupation. Biddiscombe concedes however, that "the fate of the EP at the end of the war is a complex one." This analysis suggests the general difficulty of finding a relatively clear and understandable treatment of the question and the nature of pro-Nazi resistance in U.S.-occupied Germany.⁵

While there seems to be at best a small body of work dealing with the issue of post-war Nazi resistance to the Allied occupation, there is, conversely, a large body of work dealing with German resistance to the Nazi regime. This is incredible when one considers the fact that aside from the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt against Hitler, German resistance to Nazism generally took less of an active approach than did the pro-Nazi resistance to the Allied occupation. Indeed, historians such as David Clay Large have insisted that there was little validity in the later West German claim that anti-Nazi resistance was important enough and widespread enough to validate the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as morally qualified to join the so-called "community of civilized nations".⁶ This would seem a fair comment when one considers that most of the officers involved in the July 20th plot were not firmly opposed to Hitler until the Reich was on the brink of ruin.⁷ Perhaps one could see the July 20th plot not as a revolt against Nazi tyranny, but as a revolt against an individual and a government whom had led Germany to a crushing defeat. If Germany had been winning the war, one might question whether von

Stauffenberg and his associates would have opposed Hitler and the Nazis.

Many historians have observed the post-war fortunes of the radical and pro-Nazi right wing in western Germany and have concluded that any pro-Nazi underground was insignificant. Kurt Tauber is a major voice in this respect. Tauber's Beyond Eagle and Swastika provides a comprehensive examination of the pro-Nazi and radical nationalist right in post-war West Germany, covering all aspects from veterans' associations to political parties to 'underground railways' used to transport escaping war criminals. In Tauber's view, "no serious consequences" resulted from what he termed "the wishful plans" of the crumbling Nazi hierarchy. Tauber did go into detail in discussing the undeniable fact that, as stated earlier, the Allies had expected post-war Nazi guerilla activity and had planned for it, as had some Nazis. Tauber gave an account of the "Bormann Plan", which featured Martin Bormann's staff coordinating orders for underground activities in the various *Gaue*(districts) to be carried out by party cadres and the Hitler Youth Leadership Corps. The prospective leaders of the political cells would be younger, unknown Nazis who had not been identified by the Allies as documented war criminals. According to Tauber, Bormann's staff thought that active support for a regeneration of Nazism could only come about as a result of Allied oppression. With this in mind, Nazi Werewolves would aggravate, harass and eventually annoy the Allied Military Governments to the point where a tighter and harsher rule would be imposed, thus provoking resentment and active resistance within the German populace. In general, Tauber attributes the absence of any underground Nazi guerilla activity to the exhaustion and total defeat suffered by the German people. Most historians have echoed Tauber's view, forcing those who wish to delve into the existence of a pro-Nazi underground movement to turn to the archival records of the Military Governments in Germany, despite the problems created by the inherent and often unavoidable weaknesses of these records.⁸

The second option open to active and unreformed Nazis during the *Stunde Null* period was escape from Germany, often by operating "underground railways" to

facilitate these escapes. A rich body of work exists on the cooperation of American, British and Vatican authorities (among others) in operating these "ratlines".⁹ Books by Christopher Simpson, John Loftus and Glen Infield fall into this category. Simpson and Loftus look extensively at the role played by the Catholic Church and U.S. intelligence in helping to smuggle Nazi war criminals out of Germany to safe havens such as Spain, South America and the Middle East. Infield has chosen to look at the very active role of ex-SS officers and other pro-Nazis in helping to create both the underground railways and the secret Nazi organizations used to aid this unique group of travellers. Infield examines such groups as *Die Spinne* ("the Spider"), set up by ex-SS men for the express purpose of helping their SS comrades to escape after the war.¹⁰ He tends to slide into sensationalism, although at times he does present an illuminating portrait of the undying Nazi loyalties and the powerful ideological bent of many of these organizations and individuals. Most importantly perhaps, Infield is clear in asserting that these were not simply apolitical men who had "just followed orders" during wartime and were now motivated only by self-preservation. On the contrary; although they obviously wished to avoid capture, these men were by and large steadfast Nazis who would gladly have repeated their crimes and even worked for the day when Nazism would return to Germany. The American archives add to these secondary references with details of the "Skorzeny Operation", an underground railway for escaping Nazis operated in large part by ex-SS officer Otto Skorzeny.¹¹ Clearly, there is an adequate historiographical record in this area.

The final option that was available to unreformed yet still active Nazis in the rubble of conquered Germany was the formation of political parties. OMGUS had made clear its intention to create a party system in western Germany, and many of the less infamous Nazis saw an opportunity to express their views (albeit views that were somewhat diluted for obvious reasons) through exploiting the liberal intentions of the occupying powers. Tauber, Karl Bracher and Rand C. Lewis have all directed much attention to the political activities of the Nazis and their supporters in post-war Germany. Lewis'

priorities lay with the rise of neo-Nazi fascistic groups in the FRG during the 1970s and '80s, although as part of this interest he looked at the formation of pro-Nazi political parties in western Germany in the 1940s. Lewis held that prior to the official formation of the FRG, radical right-wingers and old Nazis largely faded in their attempts to form effective political organizations. He claimed that although many unrepentant Nazis formed extremist organizations, their efforts to form overt political parties failed for two reasons: first, OMGUS crushed any such efforts, and second and perhaps even more crucially, the German public was weary of war, and especially of Nazism.¹² Lewis did concede however, that after initially attempting and failing to form pro-Nazi parties during *Stunde Null*, many Nazis went underground and eventually set up some relatively successful parties that were not as openly pro-Nazi, such as the SRP (Socialist Reich Party), which emerged in 1949.¹³ Bracher, on the other hand, claimed that the period 1946-51 saw the first major stage of development in a Nazi resurgence that hit its peak in the 1960s. Bracher asserted that beginning in U.S.-occupied Germany, extremist right-wing groups such as the DRP (*Deutsche Rechtspartei*, or German Rights Party) grew increasingly more powerful, until 1952 when Article 21 of the Basic Law outlawed the SRP and the "Economic Miracle" was in its heyday.¹⁴

The most important historiographical question on post-war German Nazism concerns what the judgement of history has been thus far. As mentioned earlier, the 1960s saw a notable increase in the activities of the pro-Nazi right in West Germany. This was due in no small part to the relative increase in the popularity and the electoral successes of neo-Nazi parties in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany) in the mid - to late 1960s (although it must be noted that at no time did these parties achieve any significant electoral success in comparison to such mainstream parties as the CDU or SPD). Beginning in 1951, when the SRP won 11% of the vote in elections in Lower Saxony, and culminating in the 1964 formation of the National Democratic Party (NPD) and its political successes in *Länder* elections from 1966-8, some people saw a frightening trend developing in West Germany; one that had its roots in the years

immediately following the end of the war.¹⁵ Chief among these commentators was a school of writers most accurately described as the "scaremongers", and typified by people such as Lord Russell of Liverpool and Wellington Long. This cluster of pseudo-historians rose to prominence in the mid - to late 1960s and early 1970s - especially until the election of Willy Brandt's SPD as the governing party - when fears of a German return to Nazism were probably as high as they have been at any time during the last 50 years. The fundamental argument of Russell, Long and others was, to put it bluntly, that Germany and the Germans had a natural affinity for Nazism, and that the events of the post-war era merely served to confirm this. By the "events of the post-war era" Russell and his ilk referred of course to the striking successes of the SRP and NPD in *Länder* elections, the abandonment of denazification, and most importantly for our purposes, the considerable activities of unrepentant Nazis (direct resistance, the "underground railways", the formation of political parties) from the very dawn of the post-war period onwards.

More recently, the overall historiographical trend in assessing the actions of pro-Nazis in the American zone during the period of 1945-49 has leaned heavily towards what now seems to be taken as conventional wisdom: that a discernable level of "above-ground" pro-Nazi activity indeed existed during this time, but that eventually, nothing much came of it - with the notable exception of the escape of some Nazi war criminals. The task in this thesis is to determine which, if either, of these interpretations is valid.

Ultimately, the most vital question is not so much whether pro-Nazi resistance groups existed but whether these groups are historically significant, not merely for West Germany in its infancy, but for contemporary Germany in the 1990s. An unavoidable corollary to this question involves a consideration of the state of Germany and the radical, pro-Nazi right over the course of the 50-odd years following the end of the Second World War. We must determine whether the relative lack of success of the radical right in Germany since the war means that such issues as pro-Nazi resistance during the occupation are to be dismissed as being interesting but, in relative terms, historically

unimportant. As we shall see, the various options pursued by obdurate and active pro-Nazis during the U.S. occupation did indeed pose much more of a threat than is generally acknowledged.

NOTES

1. There are a few, rare exceptions, such as Perry Biddiscombe's analysis of the *Deutsche Revolution*.
2. Edward N. Peterson, The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), pp. 339-352; Tom Bower, Blind Eye to Murder: Britain, America and the Purging of Nazi Germany-A Pledge Betrayed, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1981), pp. 10, 417.
3. James Lucas, Kommando: German Special Forces of World War Two, (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1985), p. 221.
4. Ibid.
5. Perry Biddiscombe, "'The Enemy of our Enemy' A View of the *Edelweiss Piraten* from the British and American Archives" in Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 30. (1995), pp. 45-51; Detlev Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life, (London: Batsford, 1987), pp. 154-164.
6. David Clay Large, "'A Gift to the German Future?': The Anti-Nazi Resistance Movement and West German Rearmament" in German Studies Review, vol. 7(3), (1984), p. 501.
7. Ibid.
8. Kurt Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika: German Nationalism since 1945, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), pp. 23-24.
9. It should be added, of course, that the Soviets cooperated with many German war criminals in the East who offered their intelligence training and their vast experience.
10. Glenn B. Infield, Secrets of the SS, (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), p. 197.
11. OSS "Report on the Skorzeny Operation" in "Intelligence Bulletin #2", April 1, 1945, MFIU #2, Schools and Training Branch, RG 226, National Archives.
12. Rand C. Lewis, A Nazi Legacy: Right Wing Extremism in Post-war Germany, (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 40.
13. Ibid.

14. Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structures and Effects of National Socialism, (New York: Praeger, 1970). p. 460.

15. Lewis, p. 43.

Chapter 2: Prelude to Occupation: The American Archives and the Disparity Between Expectation and Reality

As World War II was ending and total collapse of the Nazi regime was imminent, many Nazis plotted out their individual futures by thinking about escape, inner emigration, or, in the more distant future, political activity within the existing confines of the party system sure to be established by the occupying powers. The actions of these men have been analyzed in a variety of media (books, documentaries, etc.). The tale of those Nazis who actively fought against the Allied occupation - in this case, the U.S. occupation - is a much more elusive matter. Given the very secretive and underground nature of this active resistance, the obvious stigma attached to admitting, years later, that one had taken part in such activities, documentation has often proved wanting. This is very unlike the story of the anti-Nazi resistance, where veterans of the struggle wore their participation as a badge of honour and were more than happy to talk about their exploits. To actually come up with reliable numbers of active resisters and an exact accounting of the various pro-Nazi groups is impossible, due to the obviously shadowy nature of the phenomenon. The primary sources of information on the existence of such direct-action groups are the records of the military intelligence branch of OMGUS, as well as the files of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency. This fact has meant that determining the actual existence of post-war pro-Nazi resistance to the U.S. occupation is a process riddled with difficulties.

One of the most important liabilities of using OMGUS, OSS, and State Department documentation is the inevitable disparity between expectation and reality. At the end of the war, American commanders expected massive pro-Nazi resistance to the U.S. presence. Thus, General Eisenhower expressed the first American objective in early 1945: "we shall obliterate Nazism and German militarism, we shall overthrow the Nazi rule, dissolve the Nazi party, and abolish the cruel, oppressive, and discriminating laws and institutions which the party has created."¹ As a result it is quite certain that initially, OMGUS may have read more sinister, ideological motives into random acts of sabotage

and vandalism committed by unaffiliated individuals or youth gangs. Relatively harmless and unorganized acts such as the defacing of posters were given a darker and more purposeful meaning by anxious American officials. In retrospect, it is much easier today to consider the possibility that large sections of the German populace, which had lived through thirty-odd years of tumultuous upheaval, chaos and destruction (World War I, Versailles, hyper-inflation, the Great Depression, Nazism and the total destruction of World War II) had neither the energy nor the will to fight for Nazism. Still, without the benefit of hindsight, the U.S. authorities had ample reason to fear a violent and semi-organized Nazi resistance, primarily through the auspices of "Werewolf".

By early 1945, as U.S. troops steadily advanced eastward into the western districts of Germany, officials began to receive more information about mysterious underground Nazi resistance cells operating under the name "Werewolf". What had earlier seemed based on sheer rumour and speculation was now, in the eyes of U.S. officials, apparently based on fact. According to Lucas and others, three distinct types of Werewolf organizations operated during the last weeks of the war: i) bands of partisans operating behind Allied lines; ii) groups who appealed to the masses to take up arms and rise up against the Allies (these cells were usually composed of individual German civilians); and iii) one or more *Luftwaffe* squadrons volunteering to carry out Kamikaze attacks. Werewolf was specifically designed to fight a partisan war and to ensure loyalty to Hitler in the event of foreign occupation; accordingly, those Germans seen to be collaborating with the Allied administrators (e.g., civil servants, etc.) would theoretically be killed. It was this aspect of the Werewolves which seemed to eliminate them from serious Allied consideration prior to 1945. The fanatical nature of Hitler's persona had initially led most U.S. officials to dismiss reports of Werewolf as illogical; they reasoned that talk of preparing for resistance to foreign occupation was tantamount to admitting the possibility, if not the inevitability, of German defeat. In the view of these officials, Hitler would not have tolerated such plans and would have considered this to be defeatism of the basest kind.²

Most sources suggest the late spring of 1944 as the time when the German government first seriously endorsed the Werewolf idea. The first recruits of this ostensibly all-volunteer organization were enlisted via verbal invitation or personal recommendations by superiors. Training of the Werewolves was to be carried out by the *SS-Jagdverbände* commandos, who were the most efficient and knowledgeable combatants of partisans on the Eastern front.³

The U.S. military first received information on Werewolf through word-of-mouth and the interrogations of Germans who claimed to have knowledge of the organization. One such interrogation of German POWs concerned an *Oberstabsarzt* attached to *Sturmdortkommandantatur* Darmstadt who claimed to have overheard a February 27, 1945 conversation between the Reich Youth Leader, Moeckel, and two companions. Apparently, the Werewolf was explicitly discussed. According to the POW, Moeckel had been touring Hessen, Baden and Wuerttemberg to recruit volunteers from HJ members between the ages of eighteen and twenty for the purpose of joining Werewolf and planning the murders of German officials who collaborated with the Allied military governments already being organized in areas of western Germany. Fearing that he and his family might be murdered, this POW gave no other names.⁴

By February of 1945, the OSS seemed fairly certain that evidence of Werewolf was an indication that massive resistance groups were forming throughout Nazi Germany; accordingly, they initially anticipated a sizable post-war Nazi underground. This was made clear on February 6, 1945, when the OSS presented SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces) with a top secret report detailing what it felt was a certainty:

(There is) a Nazi underground whose main task is to sabotage all administrative activities of German or foreign authorities. All Germans who take part in the administration either actively or in an advisory capacity of whom the resistance movement does not approve, are to be assassinated. The ultimate goal is to create chaos to the point to where the

Allies would have no choice but to enlist Nazis as administrative officials. These officials would initially obey the Allies, but eventually they would carry out the orders of the underground command centre. The financing for this group is to be carried out by overseas cash accounts as well as by the accounts of foreigners (non-Germans) who would receive 10% for its keeping and administration. Every betrayal and fraud will be punished by death.⁵

In late March of 1945, the U.S. War Department received even more detailed information from another captured German. This man had worked on propaganda and training films for the German army and claimed to have witnessed the beginnings of the Werewolf movement. He described it as one large organization consisting of several cells with a similar structure (in terms of personnel) and goals. What must be taken into account here, however, is that several independent organizations of German partisans, some more organized and efficient than others, called themselves Werewolves". What made this particular interrogation so fascinating was the undeniably Nazi background of these alleged Werewolves. In several other instances, prospective or suspected Werewolves were not necessarily devoted to Nazism and to Hitler, but, as we shall see later in this chapter, to the defense of their homeland. At any rate, in this particular case, the German POW in question gave specific details of the recruitment of HJ into the Werewolf; a development he claimed to have witnessed over the period of February 22-March 29, 1945. The POW claimed that while he was on a filming mission along the Western front, he was sent to the Western headquarters of the HJ at Niederhausen/Taunus, where he was to film the activities of the HJ involved in military construction. Around this time the POW claimed that he had a conversation with a *Hauptbannfuehrer* Memminger, in which Memminger revealed that Joseph Goebbels had instructed him to create Werewolf by recruiting the most fanatical young men of the HJ. Their supervisor was to be an unnamed twenty-five-year-old HJ leader from Wiesbaden, and the organization was to exist west of the Rhine only. Recruitment was to follow two stages: at first, eligible HJ boys were to be given secret preparatory leaflets which were

inflammatory, yet vague in giving details of what the boys actually would be expected to do. The second stage was to distribute a second leaflet to the local *Bannführer*, who would then be responsible for the organization of resistance centres, shops, printing establishments, depot storage areas, assaults and sabotage. This second leaflet, which the POW claimed to have seen personally, set forth the precise details of the movement. Over the course of the next week, however, the German situation had worsened, and the young HJ members were to be evacuated and given seven months of intensive military training. As it turned out, very few of the tens of thousands of HJ thought to be available actually turned up, and as a result the plan was altered, and Werewolf was now to be concentrated in the Saar and Pfalz areas. Memminger supposedly told the POW of some isolated cases of successful operations by his Werewolves, such as the mining and detonation of a large building that was used by the Allies in an unnamed town.⁶

This POW also visited a camp near Waldmohr where fifteen- and sixteen-year old boys were in training under SS non-commissioned officers (along with some from the *Wehrmacht*). Within one week, the boys were to be trained in the use of rifles, MG-42s, rifle grenades, bazookas and hand grenades. The POW thought it noteworthy that in the previous months, the training of recruits for the *Wehrmacht* had been faced with a shortage of ammunition, yet these prospective Werewolves had allegedly been given all the ammunition they wanted. Despite this, the German POW stated that he did not believe that the Werewolf movement was sufficiently organized to have any far-reaching influence in Germany; at worst it would be confined to minor acts of sabotage. He did believe, however, that the more fanatical members of the HJ would make a serious effort to spread the movement if they were not rooted out. Although this German POW's initial assessment of Werewolf as having minimal influence may have ultimately proved prophetic, it seems that U.S. officials were more concerned with his closing statement: the more fanatical HJ members would attempt to spread the Werewolf movement.⁷

U.S. forces believed they had even greater reason to worry when more concrete evidence of Werewolf came to light, namely, the discovery and capture of some Werewolf

cell headquarters. SHAEF received this information in late April and early May, when the discovery of various Werewolf cells shed more light on the mysterious movement. One such capture and the subsequent interrogation of Werewolves was given a lengthy profile in intelligence reports as the quintessential example of a typical Werewolf cell. These particular headquarters were made known to Allied troops by a surrendering German *Gauleiter* on April 28, 1945. The camouflage of these Werewolf installations was of such high quality that two searches were undertaken before their discovery. These headquarters were concealed underground and were constructed in such a manner so as not to destroy the live trees around them. Eventually, Allied troops captured six officers and twenty-five Werewolves, most of them wearing civilian clothing. This particular Werewolf installation was found to contain weapons, a camouflaged automobile and approximately 120 horses. The obvious meticulousness and skill that went into this type of camouflage and structure was of grave concern to the U.S. command.⁸

U.S. authorities were not bothered only by the mere *potential* of these Werewolf cells to cause trouble. Some Werewolves made good on their threats. Lucas describes numerous Werewolf attacks throughout Germany during the last weeks of the war, among them the killing of a British major, John Poston. U.S. intelligence reports suggest, however, that American forces - not the British - met the brunt of Werewolf opposition in the West. Lucas attributes this to the greater fanaticism and devotion to Nazi ideals in Southern Germany, especially in Bavaria, which was to become part of the U.S. zone of occupation. On March 24, 1945, the Lord Mayor of Aachen was assassinated by Werewolf agents, thus pulling away the shroud of secrecy surrounding the movement. In an April 1, 1945 radio broadcast, Goebbels promised a full-scale Werewolf uprising, and in so doing probably created the impression among the Allies that Werewolf was much more pervasive than was actually the case. As Lucas states: "Now, Werewolf was in the open, but the Allies drew the wrong conclusion from the broadcast. The Americans and the French believed that a national uprising by the German people was either taking place or was about to, and they resolved to take the strongest measures against this national

partisan movement.”⁹ This broadcast increased American anxieties which had already been exacerbated by rumours and events of the previous weeks. During this time, U.S. officials had received word of the supposed existence of “Alpine Redoubt”, which was purported to be a network of Nazi bases in the mountains of Southern Germany and Austria from where the Nazis would make their last stand. On a more tangible level, the March 1945 murder of General Maurice Rose (the Commander of the U.S. Third Armored Division) had been attributed to Werewolf. These incidents, along with Goebbels’ pronouncements of April 1, undoubtedly contributed to American fears and expectations of the proliferation of Nazi terror groups and resistance organizations. Lucas and others claim that Eisenhower and other top American officials ultimately ignored British advice that the Werewolf and the Alpine Redoubt were at best exaggerated and at worst largely myth. Indeed, Werewolf was only intended to function *during* the war, while Germany still fought. Clearly, these initial fears of widespread Nazi resistance - fostered by wartime events such as these interrogations, reports, rumours, assassinations and discoveries of some isolated Werewolf encampments - led to OMGUS’s difficulties in separating random and spontaneous acts of violence and sabotage from actual organizational resistance among pro-Nazis after the war.¹⁰

Another obvious problem with OMGUS’s surveillance of possible resistance was the tendency to lump those who were die-hard Nazis together with those who may simply have considered themselves to be German patriots defending the Fatherland against foreign occupiers. This was not necessarily a problem in terms of OMGUS’s mandate in the U.S. zone, for in the end, an efficient and orderly administering of the Germans in their zone was undoubtedly an order of the highest priority, with ideological concerns (such as the fostering of liberal-democratic ideals among the population) running a close second. In this sense, it ultimately mattered little to OMGUS whether those who took up arms against the Occupation were ardent Nazis, Communists or neither. The mere existence of resistance was the primary concern, not the particular ideology behind it. That said, it seems clear that OMGUS was initially more likely to consider serious

direct action against the military government as Nazi-inspired, for the Americans perceived themselves as the purveyors of liberal democracy. In U.S. eyes, those opposed to these ideals must have been militarists or Nazis. This possible failure to distinguish resistance motives becomes problematic when one analyzes the occupation files with an eye towards examining the surviving strength of the Nazi ideal. U.S. authorities failed to make a distinction between Nazism and Bismarckian/Wilhelmine Prussian militarism, which they considered to be intrinsically linked. Some might make the argument that these phenomena were indeed part of the same whole, and thus make the claim that National Socialism was the predictable evolutionary result of Prussian militarism. This is, however, highly debatable, and more importantly, not the subject of this discussion. The basic concern is that in many cases, U.S. agencies seemed to make no real distinction between violence and sabotage carried out by "patriotic" Germans and such activities carried out by true Nazis. As such, this adds to the uncertainty of any analysis of the strength and significance of Nazi resistance.

The difficulty of distinguishing between truly pro-Nazi terror operations and similar events that may have been merely nationalistic efforts by apolitical Germans is evident even when observing various aspects of Werewolf. While SHAEF and OMGUS reported the HJ background of many Werewolf cells, Lucas has suggested that many of the Werewolves were not the fanatical Nazis often portrayed by occupation and SHAEF officials. Far from being the vicious ideological killers conjured up by the term "Werewolf", many members, it has been argued, joined the movement naively and in the end were forced to carry out terrorist attacks. It has been claimed that many of the Werewolves, though enthusiastic at first, were not aware of the danger in which they were placing themselves. As non-military irregulars, they would be considered terrorists by the Allies and thus would not be subject to Geneva Convention rules for captured prisoners; if captured, they could be summarily executed. On the other hand, once prospective Werewolves had reached a certain point in their training, they could not drop out (although they were initially given the impression that they could quit at any time).

Their SS instructors explained to them that they basically had two choices: to go out on missions and risk detection and possible execution; or to refuse to go and face certain execution for refusing to obey orders. Obviously, these factors create some question about the complete devotion of many Werewolves to Nazism. Therefore, even the nature of wartime Nazi resistance against the Allies via the Werewolf movement becomes murky when all relevant factors are taken into consideration. It stands to reason that making suppositions about the existence and importance of postwar, pro-Nazi direct action groups in the U.S. zone is obviously much more complex than it might initially seem to be.

In many respects, OMGUS intelligence reports were also marked by internal contradictions during the months following the end of the war. Two distinctive patterns emerge in the weekly and monthly situation reports. On the one hand, following initial fears of a large Nazi underground, the first few months revealed a surprising - to U.S. officials at least - lack of resistance to the military government. Concurrently, several intelligence reports reported a continual increase in attacks on U.S. soldiers, and as the months went by, discoveries of admittedly small pro-Nazi organizations became more frequent.

As stated above, it was difficult at first to attribute seemingly random acts of sabotage and anti-occupation violence to Nazis or to people who were sympathetic to Nazism. In fact, OMGUS and other State Department files repeatedly displayed utter amazement at what U.S. officials perceived as the relative lack of pro-Nazi activity. Typically, assessments by OMGUS intelligence would claim that

Although criticism of the Occupation is not lacking, active and organized opposition is almost totally absent... there is undoubtedly criticism of the military government for either too much denazification or not enough denazification. He (the individual German) may spread rumours of dissension among the Allies... In general, however, the German is too busy providing himself with food and fuel for his daily needs and worrying about food, fuel, and shelter for the coming winter too have much time or

energy to carry on activities hostile to the occupying powers.¹¹

Indeed, in the first few months after the war there were further rejections of the existence of any sort of Nazi or pro-Nazi underground in the U.S. Zone.

The Monthly Report of the Military Government (U.S. Zone) for August 1945 conveyed its belief clearly:

scattered instruments of sabotage of the U.S. market, acts threatening the safety of U.S. forces and intimidation of German office holders have been reported, but their number is not increasing and they do not fall under any organized pattern. It is clear that for the present there exists no organized Nazi movement, although under the stimulus of grim physical conditions which are expected to be prevalent... more active opposition may be developed. Ironically enough, one of the principal barriers to the preparation of a well-organized postwar terrorist underground appears to have been the Nazi party's own reluctance to countenance any suggestion of defeatism.¹²

This argument regarding the lack of preparation for a post-war Nazi underground might, on the surface, seem reasonable enough. Still, if one carefully considers the situation and condition of both Germany and the Nazi party from the end of the Battle of the Bulge onward, a more plausible and rational case may be made for the formation of an admittedly limited Nazi underground. Of primary importance here is understanding that it was probably Hitler alone and not necessarily his underlings who refused to consider the possibility - if not the probability - of defeat. While openly vowing to fight to the last, many high-ranking Nazis were undoubtedly planning for the end of the war and were laying the groundwork for their escape out of Germany and/or their disappearance into society at large (see Chapter 5). It is essential that one not make the mistake of assuming that Hitler's dementia and refusal to accept defeat was representative of the views of the rest of the Nazi leadership. It is even arguable as to whether Hitler himself truly believed, from the end of 1944 on, that there was any hope of snatching victory from the ever-

closing jaws of defeat. True, Hitler made repeated references to Frederick the Great, and held out hope that the Western Allies and the Soviet Union would inevitably come into conflict, but it is likely that deep down not even he believed that these events would come about in time to stave off defeat. Many historians have argued that at the end Hitler was simply determined to go down in an epic defeat, pulling all of Germany down with him. Certainly, Hitler's last will and testament spoke of the need for the Nazi ideal to survive him, even though he admitted that the Nazi party was, for the time being, finished.¹³

In addition, the tactic of focusing attention only on Hitler and basing any dismissal of a post-war Nazi resistance on his refusal to accept defeat is risky when one considers his relative lack of control and power over the military and the party by the end of the war. In the last few weeks of the war, Hitler's world consisted of his bunker and a few blocks around the Chancellory. Whatever orders Hitler gave were, for all intents and purposes, meaningless to military and party officials in the combat zone. That said, by the time U.S. officials were aware of the Werewolf they realized that at the end of the war it was likely that some of these individuals, trained specifically for partisan and guerilla warfare, would not simply abandon the cause. The leap from wartime guerilla to post-war terrorist was certainly not implausible.

Many U.S. officials assumed that re-education would reverse the indoctrination to which the Nazi regime had subjected many young men and teenaged boys. For many of these young men Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime were the only German leaders they had known. Yet, as Gerhard Rempel has pointed out, the HJ membership was not homogenous in terms of ideology and background.¹⁴ Still, the majority of the HJ were children of less than ten years of age when the Weimar Republic came to an end, and to some of these boys, Hitler was their god and Nazism was their religion. Thus, Germany's defeat had a variety of effects on the minds and attitudes of HJ members. On the one hand there were many HJ who, with the exposure of their god and his minions as false prophets and fallible mortals, reacted sharply with dismay and feelings of betrayal and a hatred of Nazism. In their eyes, Hitler had failed to elevate Germany to the

promised greater glory, leaving it more desolate, defeated and universally despised than at any point in history. In addition, a great number of HJ were more concerned with food and survival, and were ambivalent towards Nazism and Hitler. On the other hand, however, there was also a hard core of the HJ who had kept the faith and remained loyal to Hitler and the National Socialist ideal and would fight to restore it. This was the group that appeared to represent the most fertile ground for a pro-Nazi resistance and provided, along with the reasons discussed above, one of the better arguments that a future post-war Nazi underground could not be completely dismissed.

In the early weeks of the occupation, OMGUS intelligence reported assorted and random acts of violence and terror perpetrated by ex-HJ, yet dismissed them as just that: random acts with no organized attempt to seriously fight the occupation or restore Nazism. Often the violence was not directed at the military government, but at the scores of DPs (Displaced Persons) scattered throughout Germany at the end of the war. Examples of this emerged in areas such as the Bremen enclave, where in late September more than twenty young men, all ex-HJ between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three, were arrested as members of an organization which had planned to attack DPs in Hannover, and then move on to upper Bavaria, where it was claimed that "a large underground organization is supposedly developing."¹⁵ The same intelligence report held that similar groups with differing purposes were forming in many locations, with their numbers constantly increasing as more disenchanting soldiers returned. U.S. officials initially believed that although there were such groups of ex-HJ and ex-soldiers engaged in violence, they were not driven by one particular goal or motivation, and they were generally striking out in youthful frustration against whatever easy target was available. U.S. soldiers and military installations were common targets. One of the explanations given for attacks by these groups was that there was a jealous resentment of the success of U.S. soldiers with German women! At any rate, it is clear that initially, after the first week or so of the occupation, it was difficult to convince U.S. officials of any noteworthy pro-Nazi resistance to the military government.¹⁶

The difficulties inherent in the use of the archival records of the U.S. Military Government and the State Department seem obvious. There were, as we have seen, at least two vital problems with these sources. Wartime expectations initially outweighed post-war realities, and as a result in the first days of the occupation, random, meaningless acts may have been interpreted by OMGUS as having had pro-Nazi motivations. The second, closely related problem was the fact that the shadowy nature of any underground movement made it difficult to distinguish between random acts of terror and Nazi-inspired terror, and between pro-Nazi resistance and non-Nazi resistance. The various OSS, OMGUS and USFET (U.S. Forces, European Theatre) intelligence reports are schizophrenic, in the sense that they reveal the initial expectation of a massive pro-Nazi underground - based largely on the discovery of the Werewolf movement - and yet in the first months of the occupation, MG authorities often claimed that they could find no evidence of any significant direct action group. What is most confusing are the conflicting expectations and opinions of various U.S. authorities. Repeatedly, in the last days of the war and in the first days of the occupation, one finds in the various intelligence and counter-intelligence documents the assertions that Nazi-inspired resistance would only increase as time goes by, and that this threat of terrorism was the greatest threat to the occupation. Paradoxically, after the first few weeks of occupation, MG reported that not much pro-Nazi resistance had been found and more importantly, that not much *was expected*, for preparation of an underground resistance would have been tantamount to accepting defeat, and defeatism was not tolerated by the Nazi regime. As we have seen, this reasoning was flawed. There were indeed several incidents of violence and sabotage carried out at this time. Perhaps the most accurate way to describe the overall attitude of OMGUS as reflected in the archival material is as follows: In the first few months of the occupation, while U.S. officialdom claimed that there was no real pro-Nazi resistance, it was always a top-level concern, and was usually the first issue discussed by the intelligence branches in each monthly and weekly report. It was always in the minds of U.S. officials. As we shall see, following the initial confusion of OMGUS and the State

Department, there was indeed documentation of what appeared to be pro-Nazi terror carried out against the MG and those Germans who were pro-MG.

NOTES

1. Infield, Secrets of the SS, p. 193.
2. Lucas, Kommando, p. 204; OMGUS, Lucius D. Clay (Deputy Governor), "Monthly Report of the Military Governor, U.S. Zone" No. 2, September 20, 1945, in Records of the Executive Office, RG 260, NA.
3. Lucas, p. 205.
4. OSS, "PW Intelligence Bulletin" No. 2/50, April 1, 1945, MFIU #2 in Schools and Training Branch Records, RG 226, NA.
5. OSS, "Preparation for Nazi Underground", February 6, 1945, in Schools and Training Branch, RG 226, NA.
6. USFET "Prisoner of war Report on the Origin of the Werewolf Movement", May 13, 1945, Captured Personnel and Materials Branch in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
7. Ibid.
8. SHAEF "G-5 Weekly Journal of Information" No. 3, May 18, 1945 in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
9. Lucas, p. 213.
10. Ibid, pp. 206-212.
11. OMGUS "Monthly Report of the Military Government, U.S. Zone, for August", September 20, 1945, RG 260, NA.
12. Ibid.
13. Robert Payne, The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler. (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 589-590; Donald M. McKale, Hitler, the Survival Myth, (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), p. 88.
14. Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 5.

15. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 11, September 27, 1945, in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.

16. Ibid.

Chapter 3: Of Nazis and Neophytes: Youth and Direct Action

Despite the difficulties with the American archival records, and contrary to most historical accounts of occupied Western Germany, there clearly was a pro-Nazi component in the anti-Allied opposition. This opposition took on a variety of significant forms, ranging from subtle means of sabotage and obstruction of the U.S. mandate to outright violent resistance and attacks on German "collaborators" and U.S. military personnel. What is fascinating is that there appeared to be surprising contradictions in the nature of this pro-Nazi resistance. More specifically, an inverse relationship existed between the level of brute force used by these groups and the strength of their ideological commitment to Nazi ideals. As we shall see, the more sophisticated and organized a pro-Nazi group was, the less likely it was to focus on violence and physical sabotage as a means to its end. The more organized and ideologically committed anti-occupation forces tended to direct their energies toward economic sabotage and other more insidious - and ultimately dangerous - forms of resistance. It soon became clear, however, that these sophisticated groups were always committed to eventually re-establishing a form of Nazi rule in Western Germany, whether in name or in spirit. This was to be accomplished through such subtle means as making Nazis and their sympathizers seem indispensable to U.S.-occupied Germany as an instrument for making the bureaucracy more efficient. This strategy was focused either upon winning the support of OMGUS or, by *fait accompli*, putting Nazis in place to govern when the inevitable U.S. withdrawal took place. At any rate, it is clear that at least two distinct levels of pro-Nazi resistance to OMGUS were evident: first, the violent and randomly organized gangs of youths who regularly carried out overt acts of sabotage, violence and intimidation; and second, the more organized and ideologically committed pro-Nazis, often ex-officers, who carried out - or attempted to carry out - economic and political sabotage and tried thus to force their services upon the OMGUS administration. This chapter looks at the first, or lower level of anti-occupation violence.

As we have seen, initial U.S. fears of Nazi-based resistance focused on the violence

and direct action undertaken by young Germans, much in the same vein as the Werewolves. Indeed, after the first weeks of the occupation repeated reports of sabotage and violence perpetrated by youth groups flooded in. These groups operated under various banners, such as "Werewolf" and even more frequently, *Edelweiss Piraten*. U.S. records regularly referred to the *Edelweiss Piraten* as the name most frequently mentioned in reports of violent organized resistance, and when seemingly random acts of violence, intimidation and sabotage occurred, the people responsible usually claimed to be *Piraten*. Several historians, chief among them Detlev Peukert, have discussed the *Piraten* in its pre-1945 forms. Before 1945 the *Piraten* was a youth gang of dissidents within the HJ that later ostensibly developed some full blown anti-Nazi tendencies, but it is Perry Biddiscombe's description of the postwar *Piraten* that is relevant in this discussion. Biddiscombe describes the *Piraten* of 1946 as "being an outright resistance movement pitted against the occupying powers."¹

By late 1945, the *Edelweiss Piraten* had eclipsed the Werewolf as a potentially dangerous group in the eyes of OMGUS intelligence.² This was an obvious departure from the common view among Allied intelligence officers during the war; namely, that the *Piraten* could be classified as anti-Nazi and a part - albeit an ineffectual and relatively inconsequential part - of the oft-mentioned German resistance against Hitler. Following Germany's defeat, the *Piraten* had broken up into several splinter groups, and the result was an increasing number of new anti-Allied youth gangs. For our purposes, the pre-1945 *Piraten* are of minor concern, especially when it becomes obvious that most post-war terror groups operating under the name of the *Piraten* had dubious ties to the wartime and pre-war versions of the organization. The issue at hand is the significance of the anti-Allied actions of people calling themselves *Piraten*, regardless of what the *Edelweiss Piraten* had been before *Stunde Null*. Even the politics of the pre-1945 *Piraten* are problematic; several historians have pointed out that the objections of this purported "anti-Nazi" group to the Hitler regime were at best ephemeral. The pre-1945 version of the *Piraten* was opposed to the rigid disciplinarianism and totalitarianism represented by

the HJ, although the core beliefs of the *Piraten* were by and large synonymous with those of the National Socialists.³

How did these “new” *Piraten* get their start as terror groups involved in direct resistance against the U.S. occupation? Actually coming up with solid membership figures and an exact accounting of the activities of the *Piraten*, or for that matter any other resistance group, involves a great deal of conjecture, due to the flaws in the source material and the murky nature of the subject matter. Nevertheless, the American records provide us with very useful and presumably reliable information regarding the post-war activities of the *Edelweiss Piraten*. In 1945, U.S. knowledge of anti-occupation *Piraten* activities was based primarily on hearsay and rumours; as noted above, during the first months of the occupation, such rumours were usually dismissed. By the end of 1945, however, reports of anti-occupation *Piraten* groups seemed increasingly to have a more factual basis, although full details were still unclear. This increase in *Piraten* activity was part of what U.S. officials perceived as growing German resentment against the occupation. In January 1946, USFET G-2 finally uncovered what it described as “possible evidence” of anti-occupation *Piraten* activity in Kreis Ingolstadt.⁴ Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) Region IV (Munich) confidently identified this group as *Piraten* and surmised that it had a headquarters in Frankfurt, but they were unsure of its origins, and even suggested that this *Piraten* gang may have descended from Werewolf.⁵ Whatever the *Piraten* had been earlier, by this point it had come to be regarded by many occupation officials as an anti-occupation, crypto-Nazi movement. Several acts of violence and sabotage were carried out by this new version of the *Edelweiss Piraten*, or at least by those claiming to belong to the organization.

There were two periods of fairly widespread *Piraten* activity in the U.S. Zone: first, in late 1945 and early 1946, before a large-scale crackdown on the *Piraten* gangs; and again in 1947-8, when various *Piraten* groups began briefly to re-emerge as perpetrators of violent direct action. Wire-cutting was by far the most common form of resistance, whether undertaken by the *Piraten* or by others. The fact that wire-cutting was so

common among the more violently youth-oriented groups gives us a clue as to their lack of a far-reaching plan or ideological vision. It is difficult to understand how Nazism could have been restored by minor interference with Allied communications. The military government and U.S. troops saw wire-cuts more as an annoyance than as a grave threat or an obstacle to carrying out the occupation. This type of activity reflected the youthful rebelliousness of the perpetrators, for indeed, wire-cutting and petty theft seemed to be aimless and designed simply to harass. The *Piraten* thus typified youthful irreverence and petty adolescent resentments. While holding essentially Nazi beliefs (militarism, racialism, radical nationalism), they displayed no sense of coherent strategy in planning their attacks - they simply lashed out at authority. This was not to say, however, that all *Piraten* activity was relatively harmless or inconsequential. The interrogation of a 17-year old *Piraten* member revealed the violent nature of the organization, as he recounted tales of frequent beatings administered to Poles, U.S. soldiers and others, usually carried out with weapons such as blackjacks. Indeed, *Piraten* members carried out several assaults on U.S. military personnel and German "collaborators", and in doing so helped to foster a growing climate of concern among occupation officials. As the occupation wore on, U.S. officials continuously described "growing opposition" and "an increase in incidents involving assaults on U.S. soldiers".⁶

By the spring of 1946 OMGUS had carried out wide-ranging surveillance of the U.S. Zone, and although occupation officials had initially regarded the *Piraten* as more nuisance than threat, the growing reports of scattered *Piraten* activity were increasingly regarded with alarm. Were these post-war versions of the *Piraten* truly pro-Nazi, or were they simply opposed to *any* form of authority, regardless of ideological considerations? In its original assessment of the *Piraten* as an anti-Allied resistance group, USFET G-2 had detected no association with any type of Nazi conspiracy. In fact, the *Piraten* were seen strictly as "a policing problem rather than a counter intelligence problem".⁷ Despite this claim, intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies were very interested in the results of the police crackdown and the interrogations of suspected *Piraten*. These operations

confirmed that the *Piraten* constituted something more than a few youth gangs operating randomly. The Munich CIC infiltrated an *Edelweiss Piraten* council meeting and arrested approximately 70 members, including the local leader and his staff. It was also discovered that *Piraten* groups were fairly widespread, existing in areas such as Schwandorf-Brachfels, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Schaarburg bei Nuremberg, Freising and Ettling. Statistics compiled by the *Kriminalpolizei* of Munich showed that 159 known *Piraten* were arrested between December 1945 and April 1946, with approximately 31% hailing from the American Zone, and with the majority of those captured originating from Prussia (73.6%) and Bavaria (15.6%). Interestingly, the relatively low percentage of Bavarians making up the *Piraten* membership convinced some observers that because the appeal of the *Piraten* to the notoriously pro-Nazi Bavarian populace was lower than might have been expected, the *Piraten*'s credentials as pro-Nazis were highly dubious.⁸

For people who did see the *Piraten* as pro-Nazi, the tainted nature of the movement seemed to become inescapably obvious as offshoots and cover groups of the *Edelweiss Piraten* gradually came to light. From 1946 to 1947 Allied intelligence reported the discovery of several direct action groups that were either associated with the *Edelweiss Piraten* or were in fact *Piraten* operating under different names. Often, *Edelweiss* groups simply changed the name and insignia of their organization in order to avoid CIC security sweeps. A subject arrested by CIC Region II (Frankfurt) revealed that due to the wide publicity that the *Piraten* had created, the letters EP had been replaced by the letters DT (*Deutschland Tod*) and the *Edelweiss* emblem by a 5-Pfennig piece. This move away from designation as *Edelweiss Piraten* was in large part the inevitable result of the U.S. crackdown on the organization and other groups in the spring of 1946. The increased pressure on the *Piraten* made retreat and redesignation a wise policy for suspected *Piraten*. This police sweep pushed the *Piraten* back into the shadows, and by mid 1946 there was a noticeable decrease in reported *Piraten* activity in the U.S. Zone. In fact, American intelligence officers considered the *Edelweiss Piraten* defunct, or at least the cover name of *Edelweiss Piraten*, which was no longer being used. Obviously OMGUS

and U.S. intelligence agencies did not dismiss the probability that the organization had broken up into splinter groups with different names: OMGUS simply believed that the name *Edelweiss Piraten* would no longer serve as the banner of various violent youth groups. By late 1946 however, the name *Edelweiss Piraten* was once again popping up in interrogations, and reports of renewed *Piraten* activity started to accumulate. In October, 470th CIC reported the resurgence of the *Piraten* along the lines of three geographical action circles: Action Circle Bavaria, with headquarters in Munich; Action Circle Rhineland, headquarters unknown; and Action Circle Northern Germany, headquarters in Hamburg. Their activities were essentially of the same nature as before, and as had been the case earlier, a dose of ominous rumours blurred the known facts regarding these *Piraten* cells. In May 1947, for instance, along with the usual reports of nuisance-oriented activities by the *Piraten*, U.S. intelligence officials heard that five alleged *Piraten* members were planning to bomb a *Spruchkammer* (a building which housed hearings and tribunals against accused Nazi war criminals) in Dachau, a dubious rumour at best. In the end, however, although there was a brief resurgence of *Piraten* activity, the threat to the U.S. occupation was negligible. As we have seen, the *Edelweiss Piraten* consisted of very loosely linked groups manned by angry youth who had no particular master plan, other than harassment and the launching of assaults on individuals who in one way or another represented the U.S. occupation. Therefore, while the sentiments and basic beliefs of the *Piraten* may have been pro-Nazi at heart, their ideological *commitment* to Nazism was dubious, and they had no substantive plan to attempt a Nazi restoration.⁹

The post-war *Edelweiss Piraten* were but one of several groups that functioned along similar lines: gangs of young men who held views analogous to most of the basic tenets of Nazism and who often took violent action against individuals associated with the occupation. Even as violence and sabotage incidents attributed to the *Piraten* declined in the spring of 1946, USFET intelligence saw a continuing increase in direct action on the part of other youth groups. A typical intelligence report during this period stated that “reports of local resistance organizations continue to be received from all over the

zone...the name of *Edelweiss Piraten* is falling in popularity as a cover name, but the numbers of idle youth engaged in subversive activity appears to be growing." As was the case with *Edelweiss* activity, the deeds of these other organizations consisted largely of sabotage (such as wire-cutting and theft), intimidation and personal violence. As with the *Piraten*, these gangs were not rigidly structured. In many cases, what U.S. officials deemed "subversive activities" carried out by suspected Nazi groups were probably actually the efforts of angry individuals working alone. Included among these transgressions were threatening letters, which often were attributed to radical pro-Nazi groups, yet could easily have been the work of one or two pranksters. Usually, such letter-writers specialized in making vague threats. For example, a letter received by the *Leiter Sonderstelle* of the Landshut civic administration declared: "to all anti-Fascists, you belong also to those who are against us. We have you to thank for our present unfortunate circumstances. The day will come when you will be obliged to answer for this. We warn you today and promise that we will not forget. Signed, the National Socialists who will always remain National Socialists."¹⁰ Other letters came from individuals claiming to represent any number of nebulous resistance groups. In Munich, the *Minister für Sonderaufgaben* received a threatening letter from a man who signed himself as a member of the "*Deutsche Freiheitsbewegung*" or "German Freedom Movement" (a combination of the *Edelweiss Piraten*, the Werewolf and the *Wiesbadenerschule*) and claimed that his organization had stores of arms and ammunition in its possession and would take violent action by June of 1946. In fact, the *Wiesbadenerschule* was one of the top secret training schools of the wartime Werewolf, suggesting that the letter-writer had received Werewolf training. Most letters obviously could have been the work of pranksters and crackpots (and in many cases they were), although occupation authorities usually felt that they could take no chances. The likelihood that a certain number of deranged individuals were acting independently, combined with the declining quality of the occupational intelligence agencies - especially after many of the most qualified personnel had returned to the United States - led to

confusion and mistakes in identifying anti-Allied direct action groups. Nevertheless, we can identify some of these elusive organizations.¹¹

Many of these groups were similar in the nature of their organization, activities and composition to the *Edelweiss Piraten*. The membership base of these organizations was young Germans, usually ex-HJ in their early 20s or younger, with perhaps a few older leaders who had served in the SS or the *Wehrmacht*. For the most part, as with the *Piraten*, the majority of these gangs, while espousing Nazi credos and employing Nazi symbolism, were without far-reaching political aims, and 'got their kicks' from engaging in meaningless violence. Occupation authorities often did see these groups for what they were: mostly localized movements whose nuisance-type activities were on the rise, although they functioned at an unsophisticated level. OMGUS assessed the situation as a case of "organized activity such as that of the *Edelweiss Piraten*: lessening and more petty and diversified forms of resistance appearing to be on the upgrade."¹² Several groups fit into this category, including the *Acht-und-Achtzig*, *Drei Herzen*, "E-Pag", a variety of groups assuming the name "Werewolf", and various unnamed associations of ex-HJ.

Along with occasional acts of physical violence and petty sabotage, the activities of these organizations often consisted of relatively harmless ventures such as black-marketeering. "E-Pag" was a typical case. The group was allegedly a descendent of the *Edelweiss Piraten*, and it engaged in black-marketeering activities centred around the railroad centres of Western Germany (such as Frankfurt, Würzburg, Stuttgart, Bamberg, Munich, and Kassel). The "E-Pag" was a clear example of the relative ease with which direct action groups could make chameleon-like shifts in their outward appearance. This particular group had abandoned the designation *Piraten*, and began calling themselves "*Polentöten*" ("killers of Poles"), reflecting their prowess in harassing former Polish slave labourers. When this new name failed to remain secret, they became the "E-Pag". The *Acht-und-Achtzig* was another group of young Germans that had adopted its name both as a means of avoiding detection and of expressing their allegiance to Nazism and to

Hitler. Their members used the greeting "88" among themselves, with "88" referring to the 8th letter of the alphabet, "H". Hence, "88" meant "HH" ("Heil Hitler"). This group, like the E-Pag, took part in black-marketeering in conjunction with random attacks on foreigners, soldiers and Germans working for military government.¹³

In another triumph of symbolism over substance, some youth gangs adopted the name "Werewolf". By early 1946 there were in fact almost no wartime Werewolf cells still intact. On extremely rare occasions the shadows of former cells were discovered, as was the case in Stornberg, where the Americans rolled up remnants of *Aktion Streck*, a Werewolf group organized for Bavaria.¹⁴ This was an exception, however, and in almost all cases these new, self-proclaimed Werewolves were not associated in any way with the wartime Werewolf; they simply adopted the name in order to profit from its image of violent and deadly resistance. An investigation into one of these new, so-called "Werewolf" groups in Friedberg revealed as much. In this case, a group of youths ranging from ages 14 to 19 had been operating under the name Werewolf Group IV. While this gang had carried out some random assaults, the bulk of their activity consisted of issuing crude Nazi propaganda. The youths distributed leaflets quoting Hitler and denouncing both communism and the American occupation, and they painted Nazi slogans on walls. The story behind their use of the name "Werewolf" is especially revealing. The young Germans claimed to have first heard about the Werewolves by reading a newspaper article describing the organization, and subsequently they decided to form their own Werewolf group. There was, however, one slight problem: they had no caches of weapons, and were neither trained nor motivated enough to take up arms against the military government. In short, these adolescents were *not* highly skilled, dangerous and vicious commandos. Truly, the name "Werewolf" was a misnomer. In addition to these groups, there was also an assortment of similar anti-occupation organizations such as the Rommel Group and the Sonnenrad Division which, while ostensibly pro-Nazi, were relatively passive and harmless.¹⁵

While "junior Nazi" groups such as E-Pag and *Acht-und-Achtzig* were minor irritants

to the occupation and the German citizenry. Other direct action groups, especially those that fell under the leadership of ex-SS officers or other experienced leaders, were much more of a concern. Their violent actions were no more sophisticated than those of the groups mentioned above, yet they were much more spectacular and received much more publicity. One such organization that inspired banner headlines was Siegfried Kabus' "Odessa" cell, "Odessa" being an acronym for "*Organisation der Ehemaligen SS-Angehörigen*". This small but violent group of men engaged in a dramatic and high-profile form of direct action against the occupation. The Kabus gang's *modus operandi* was not simply to direct its violence at individual U.S. soldiers or German "collaborators"; its goal was to strike at what it saw as the principal manifestation of the doctrine of collective guilt, namely the *Spruchkammern* (denazification tribunals).¹⁶ This is not to say that Odessa was not interested in retribution against individuals, for according to OMGUS one of the organizing principles of Odessa was to murder and terrorize Germans working in the government bureaucracy. The wrath of the Kabus gang was directed at Germans it regarded as traitors to the Fatherland. This involved the creation of a new stab in the back theory, with Germans "betraying" their nation by taking over the denazification process. It was for this reason that Kabus' Odessa gang bombed *Spruchkammern* in Stuttgart, Esslingen and Backnang within a span of seven days in October 1946. These attacks occurred after the U.S. had turned over denazification trials to the Germans in June 1946, which meant that Odessa's sights were set on pro-Allied Germans. Once again, the majority of Kabus' cell were young men; in fact, two of the defendants in the Kabus trial were under 18 years of age. Like the *Edelweiss Piraten* and other anti-Allied organizations, Odessa was not monolithic in structure, as Kabus' group made up only one cell. Kabus, for his part, was an ex-SS major, and under his leadership, the Stuttgart Odessa was far more prone to violence than its sister cells. Other Odessa groups restricted themselves to helping Nazis get out of the country, to distributing forbidden Nazi literature, and to storing weapons, especially explosives. Obviously, one can assume that eventually these weapons were intended for use. However in the

security crackdown against Odessa that followed the Kabus trial, resisters were arrested only on charges of possessing weapons, Nazi literature and false identification papers, not for actually carrying out violent acts.¹⁷

Kabus regarded his group as having been provoked to take violent action by both the German assumption of denazification duties and by the Nuremberg verdicts on surviving Nazi officials. Shortly after the Nuremberg verdicts were rendered, Kabus' cell produced posters declaring that "Nuremberg was not a verdict but murder!" Along with the *Spruchkammer* bombings of October 1946, Kabus' gang also burned down a church because the pastor of the parish had taught that Hitler was a criminal. Not long after the bombings, Kabus and his Odessa cell of ten young men were captured in Stuttgart and held for trial. The relatively speedy capture of the gang indicated that Military Government was not dealing with a sophisticated and highly organized group, and was in fact faced with a band of determined fanatics using the blunt instrument of brute force. Still, the trial, held during the first few weeks of January 1947, received heavy media coverage within the U.S. Zone: all the newspapers carried detailed accounts. Occupation officials were concerned with the apparent public apathy during the trial, and this concern was heightened when evidence arose of public sympathy for Kabus' young followers after they were found guilty, and after Kabus himself was sentenced to death. Immediately after the Kabus trial ended, the question of whether or not pro-Nazi direct action groups were a threat to the occupation became a live issue for U.S. officials. Even after the Kabus cabal was safely locked up, the Nuremberg *Spruchkammer* was bombed by a so-called "Werewolf" unit led by a former SS officer named Zitzmann. This fed the fear that perhaps the use of random terror, as blunt as it seemed, could in fact endanger the denazification process.¹⁸

The Odessa bombings were probably the most notorious example of direct and violent anti-occupation resistance, yet they also showed the limitations of aimless attacks on the institutions of the U.S. occupation. It is true that the Kabus trial and subsequent bombings at Nuremberg did engender some fears among U.S. officials of a violent Nazi

resurgence, but the gap between fear and reality was considerable. If Kabus and others like him were hoping to touch off a full scale resurgence of Nazism in Western Germany, they were sorely mistaken. The expressions of antipathy among the German public towards the occupation were probably more a reflection of the natural irritation of being ruled by a foreign power than they were a symptom of widespread sympathy or nostalgia for Nazism. The actions of violent groups such as Odessa, the *Edelweiss Piraten*, and the various associations of HJ and young *Wehrmacht* veterans only served to alienate all but the most fanatic Nazis, and they were usually more an indication of the mental instability and lunacy of some of the hard-core Nazi faithful than of their fitness to rule. Ironically, the bluntness and crudity of these groups overshadowed any of their ideological leanings. The lack of substantive inter-cell organization, the inability to sustain a coherent and consistent political ideology and the refusal of these groups to work within the available social structures were all factors that doomed violent resistance to failure. Quixotic charges at the occupational windmill were not the solution for many who wished to see a reemergence of some form of Nazism in Western Germany. Undoubtedly, many of the participants in *Edelweiss*-type groups sincerely desired a reborn Nazi state, yet they had no coherent or plausible plan of action. The simple fact was that these ostensibly pro-Nazi direct action groups were, in the final analysis, a substantive threat neither to the U.S. occupation nor to its most important program, the denazification of Germany.

Although the limitations of the direct-action groups are obvious, one cannot simply dismiss the lure that these organizations held out to a segment of German youth, especially to adolescent males. At the time, Germans in the American zone seemed torn over the impact of these groups upon the country's children and young adults. On the one hand, one typical U.S. report declared that "clergymen, politicians, university professors and youth leaders are convinced that German youth does not follow the way of thinking of reactionaries such as Kabus."¹⁹ On the other hand, many German leftists in the American zone heartily disagreed, and several KPD members maintained that

German youth was still, for the most part, orientated toward fascism and that Kabus was being hailed as a martyr in many youth circles.²⁰ Whatever the truth, a very basic fact could not be denied: the majority of people involved in anti-Allied direct-action were young men; more often than not they were ex-HJ or had served in the *Wehrmacht* during the latter stages of the war. Even supposedly anti-HJ organizations such as the *Edelweiss Piraten* had been co-opted by the HJ.

It is questionable whether one can make the leap from identifying a group as being composed mostly of ex-HJ to claiming that such a group was inherently sympathetic to Nazism. As we have seen, the ideological commitment of these organizations was not as evident as their propensity for violence. Although one might argue that the HJ backgrounds of these gangs was *prima facie* evidence of their Nazi leanings, this was not necessarily the case. As noted above, their resistance to the occupation could perhaps be attributed as much to misguided nationalism and to the idealism and energy of youth as to devotion to *Führer* and party. The difficulty of assuming guilt by association goes back to the fact that Nazism had no monopoly on ultra-nationalism: it was an integral aspect of Nazism, but it was not *exclusive* to Nazi ideology. One need only look at contemporary examples, such as the war effort of the Soviet Union against Germany during WW II: was it communism or patriotism that fuelled the near-superhuman effort of the Soviet citizenry? Even Stalin did not call on the memory of Lenin and the ideals of the 1917 revolution for inspiration: instead he harkened back to the Russian heroes of old, including Tsarist generals who had battled Napoleon. The point of this example is that in practical terms, ardent nationalism knows no ideological or geographical boundaries. Still, while it may seem easy enough to dismiss German youth involvement in violent anti-occupation groups as the enthusiastic but misguided activity of young people sowing their nationalistic oats, there was an undeniable appeal to Nazi ideals among many of them (as we shall see momentarily), regardless of whether or not they had a clear game plan of a Nazi future and how to achieve it.

What, aside from an opportunity to express nationalist impulses, was the appeal for

young people? This question of youth and Nazism interested occupation officials enough to merit an intensive investigation into how the attitudes and the general condition of German youth might leave them susceptible to violent appeals to Nazism. These enquiries reached their peak in 1946 with the discovery of the large underground HJ-conspiracy uncovered by Operation Nursery - of which more will be said later - and the overall increase in anti-occupation violence and sabotage. In February 1946, the 3rd U.S. Army released a comprehensive Intelligence Report including an analysis of the problems that supposedly led German youth to engage in violent anti-Allied activity. The basic thrust of this assessment was that, as in 1919, Germany's youth were turning from a bleak present and a dismal future to a past that was - in the view of young Germans - rosy and glorious. The report specifically explained the hopelessness felt by post-war German youth in the following terms:

...the causes no less resemble those of the aftermath of World War I. Youth, which has just been seeing itself on the top of the world with dizzying prospects of careers in an army, government or economy that was destined to dominate large parts of the world, if not all of it, finds itself now confronted with a future that is most unpromising, to say the least. Youth which has been taught the supremacy of the German race over all other human beings now sees the Germans as the universal object of hate and contempt. Youth brought up to believe in the paramount importance of all soldierly virtues sees itself deprived of even the right of being a soldier, and is told that all its erstwhile military heroes did was criminal. Youth, finally, which was indoctrinated with the maxim that might makes right, sees itself defeated by superior might and the object of foreign domination.²¹

In the eyes of the Military Government, the key to quashing youth-based neo-Nazi organizations was to provide German teenagers with prospects for the future, and not "a program of breastbeating, punishment seeking."²²

In retrospect, this explanation for the overrepresentation of youth in direct-action groups, while partly accurate, was also an exercise in hyperbole. It was not necessarily

the deprivation of soldierly occupations that created disenchanting youth; it was the deprivation of any occupation whatsoever. Subsequent intelligence reports cited idleness and boredom as among the chief causes of youth violence. Investigations into the *Edelweiss Piraten* in certain areas revealed that up to 90% of its members were unemployed. However, even boredom, lack of work and international ostracization did not paint the entire picture. Other reasons for the membership of German youth in crypto-Nazi anti-occupation groups became evident.²³

Anti-semitism constituted an unavoidable component in the link between German youth, anti-occupation direct action, and an attraction to Nazism. As was the case with radical nationalism, rabid anti-semitism was not unique to Nazism. During the Nazi regime, however, state-sanctioned anti-semitism had been pushed up to a new level. While some might argue that anti-semitism was ensconced even more deeply in Russian and Eastern European history and tradition than in German history, *no* other state had carried anti-semitic policy to its most horrifying extreme: the Final Solution. Some authorities now argue that, more than any other characteristic, anti-semitism and racism were the defining traits of Nazism: more than the search for *Lebensraum*, more than militarism, and even more than the idea of the *Führerprinzip*.²⁴ With this in mind, by the end of 1946 OMGUS had decided to probe the depths of anti-semitic feeling among Germans in the American zone, focusing specifically on people 18 years of age or older. The survey was repeated by the Information Control Division in April of 1948, with particular attention focused on youth between the ages of 15 and 18.

The results were somewhat ambivalent, although some fascinating general conclusions could be drawn. In the first place, ICD found the general prevalence of anti-semitic attitudes to have subsided between the 1946 survey and the 1948 follow-up, especially in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse. This was obviously a questionable conclusion when the age cohort sampled by each poll was different. Interestingly enough, in the 1948 survey, OMGUS surmised that "racist" attitudes - with racism being differentiated from anti-semitism - had "increased sharply" throughout the zone, with

Russians, blacks and others replacing Jews as scapegoats and objects of hatred. Perhaps this was an indication that Germans had not changed their attitudes and that the only reason for the decline in anti-semitism was the decrease in the size of the Jewish population. For our purposes however, the most important finding was that Germans between the ages of 15 and 19 formed the most anti-semitic segment of the population, and that this prejudice carried over across boundaries of class, location and gender. The significance of this finding is magnified by the discovery that in most cases outside of this age group, regional location and the level of education were the common factors in determining an attraction to anti-semitism. The final estimate was that 22% of Germans between the ages of 15 and 19 were considered to be "extremely anti-semitic." in 1948.²⁵

The issue of the so-called "formative years" mentioned above is relevant here. While Germans coming of age during the Nazi era (ages 15-19) were found to be the most anti-semitic age group, those coming of age during World War I and the early Weimar period (ages 40-49) were found to be the *least* anti-semitic. Why was this the case? The reason was that these "least anti-semitic Germans" came of age at a time when war was increasingly being seen as futile and when German political and social culture became more liberal than it had ever been. The most revealing aspect of anti-semitism among post-WW II German youth was the role of education. The ICD survey showed that while the level of educational achievement reduced anti-semitism in most cases, this was not so with regard to young Germans, or at least not to the degree that it was among older Germans. For occupation officials, the obvious explanation was that the current German educational system was failing to counteract anti-semitism. Even more so, it implied that education during the Nazi period had a major and *lasting* impact on the attitudes of German youth. What OMGUS seemed to forget was the years of indoctrination in the Nazi-run educational system. This consideration makes it exceedingly difficult to determine what affected the perceptions of German youth more: the Nazi educational system or the post-war educational system. Still, the point cannot be overemphasized: education was a dominant and lasting factor in inculcating many

German youths with strong anti-semitic attitudes that survived the Nazi regime. This is a crucial marker for the survival of other Nazi attitudes as well.²⁶

What can be drawn from this discussion? It is clear that despite a lack of attention from most historians, several anti-Allied direct action groups existed and operated in the U.S. Zone. On at least a superficial level, these groups espoused Nazi beliefs and ideals. Some of these gangs were prone to violence, and their activities ranged from assaults on individuals to bombings to wire-cutting, the latter being the most common pursuit. It soon became clear to the Americans that organizations such as the *Edelweiss Piraten*, *Acht-und Achtzig*, Odessa and other associations of ex-HJ were by and large made up of young German men, although they were sometimes led by a few older men, some of whom were ex-SS officers. Although many of these groups were occasionally violent, and although many of them openly expressed the same core beliefs that typified Nazism and often identified themselves as Nazis, their devotion to Nazism (in terms of their desire to work for a Nazi rebirth) was usually doubtful.

Certainly, most youths who joined these organizations were indeed rabid nationalists and anti-semites, and they thereby subscribed to two of the core elements of Nazi philosophy. Their anti-semitism had been institutionally entrenched by the Nazi educational system, whose efforts lingered long after the war, and which, in OMGUS's view, the post-war educational system may have reinforced. These youth gangs could probably be considered to be Nazis in spirit, although they possessed no coherent and cogent plan for actually restoring any semblance of a Nazi state in Germany. This is not to say that these groups were not a major source of concern to American intelligence organizations; they clearly were. The 1946 crackdown on the *Piraten* and the extensive discussion and coverage of the *Spruchkammer* bombing trial proved as much. Simply put, however, the bulk of direct activity by youthful militants amounted in the final analysis to nuisance activity; it created relatively minor irritations incapable of preventing or even seriously impeding OMGUS from carrying out its mandate. Joining these groups was a dubious option for important Nazis who had evaded capture at the end of the war.

Hence, the violent anti-occupation resistance was usually left to disenchanted youth who generally opposed all authority, especially foreign authority. This does not imply that there were not pro-Nazi organizations that were far more insidious, organized, and methodical. On the contrary, as we shall see in the next chapter, there were Nazi organizations that had a clear vision of the goals that they hoped to achieve: subverting OMGUS and restoring some semblance of Nazi influence and structure to the embryonic West German state.

NOTES

1. Peukert points out that the *Piraten* arose in the mid 1930s. with the formation of territorial gangs of youth that rebelled against stifling Nazi authority. Interestingly, the original *Piraten* seemed to share much in common with the 1950s rebellious "biker gangs" which developed on the underside of American culture. Most *Piraten* filled their time with activities such as hiking, singing and beating up HJ. Fighting Nazi conformity was their original *raison d'être*. Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, pp. 154-164; Biddiscombe, "The Enemy of our Enemy" in The Journal of Contemporary History 30: Jan, 1993. p. 40
2. "Werewolf" refers to the post-war remnants of various Werewolf cells as well as groups which used the name of "Werewolf" in one form or another, even though they were in no way linked to the wartime Werewolf. The wartime Werewolf had no plans for a German defeat, of which talk was *verboten*.
3. Biddiscombe, "The Enemy of our Enemy" p. 37.
4. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" no. 28. 24 Jan. 1946 in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany). RG 59. National Archives (NA).
5. Ibid.
6. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 44. 16 May 1946; No. 49. 20 June 1946, all in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59. NA.
7. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 35. 14 March 1946; No. 36. 21 March 1946; No. 42. 2 May 1946; all in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59. NA.
8. Ibid.
9. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 36. 24 March 1946; No. 65. 10 October 1946; "Intelligence Summary" No. 8. 22 May 1947. All in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany). RG 59 NA.
10. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 36. 21 March 1946; in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59. NA.
11. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 36. 21 March 1946; No. 44. 16 May

1946, all in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59. NA.

12. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 36 21 March 1946; in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.

13. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 49 20 June 1946, "Eucom Intelligence Summary" No. 8 22 May 1947; all in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.

14. On several occasions Werewolf stockpiles of weapons and ammunition were discovered left in place since the end of the war.

15. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Briefing for Week ending June 21, 1946"; U.S. Political Advisor for Germany, Office of the Director of Intelligence, OMGUS Analysis and Reports Section, 24 June 1946; both in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA; "Illegal Activities in U.S. And British Zones" 16 December 1946, Annex No. 1, in Office of the Military Government for Land Greater Hesse, Individuals Wanted for Illegal Activities 1945-49, OMGUS Public Safety Branch, RG 260, NA.

16. It should also be noted that Odessa was one of many groups that helped Nazi war criminals escape after the war, although my interest in this chapter is in Odessa's role in the bombings.

17. "The Spruchkammer Bombing Trial" 4 January 1947, OMGUS Public Relations Office, Berlin APO 742. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA; Office of Military Government, Land Wuerttemberg-Baden "Intelligence Report" No. 43. 20 November 1946. in Records Relating to Public Opinion, Information Control Division, APO 154. RG 260. NA.

18. USFET "Intelligence Report" No. 2 8 January 1947; No. 4 22 January 1947; "The Spruchkammer Bombing Trial" 4 January 1947, OMGUS Public Relations Office, Berlin APO 742, all in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA; Office of Military Govt., Land Wuerttemberg-Baden, "Intelligence Report" No. 43 20 November 1946, in Records Relating to Public Opinion, Information Control Division, APO 154, RG 260, NA; Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 405.

19. Office of Military Govt., Land Wuerttemberg-Baden, "Intelligence Report" No. 6. 5 February 1947, in Records Relating to Public Opinion, Information Control Division,

APO 154, RG 260, NA.

20. Ibid.

21. USFET "Daily Intelligence Digest" No. 120 26 February 1946, In U.S. Army File: 350.09 GEC-Information Control Division (ICD). RG 59. NA

22. Ibid.

21. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 42 2 May 1946, in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany). RG 59. NA.

24. John S. Conway, "National Socialism and the Christian Churches During the Weimar Republic", p. 134; Ian Kershaw, "Ideology, Propaganda, and the Rise of the Nazi Party", p. 167; both in The Nazi *Machtergreifung*, ed. by Peter D. Stachura, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983)

25. What makes this number so indicative is that the pollsters rejected those who bore only some degree of anti-semitic feeling. This figure of 22% describes people with strident and undeniable anti-semitic feelings. In the age group of 40-49 years, 12% were described as "intense anti-semites". For the remainder of the population, the estimate was 15%. These numbers were determined by asking seven "loaded" questions, ranging from "Do you believe that some races are less worthy than others?" to "Would you be against having a Jew live in the same street as you?" The respondents were then asked to rate their feelings about the answer they gave, i.e., "strong", "not very strong", "very strong". OMGUS "Opinion Surveys" 22 May 1948. Information Control Division, (Berlin) APO 742, RG 260, NA.

26. Ibid.

Chapter 4: A Very Real Threat: Attempts to Create a New Nazi State

When assessing the Nazi threat in early post-war Germany, it is more revealing if one examines those groups that were less direct, more complex, and indeed had a long-range blueprint for the eventual revival - at least in some form - of a National Socialist Germany. This went beyond the issue of the mere self-preservation of a group of unapologetic Nazis, as these groups were often composed of individuals who were obviously willing to make personal sacrifices for their cause. The most fascinating aspect of this inquiry is that too often, when analyzing the threat of Nazism, international observers have focused almost exclusively on the obvious outward manifestations. This is evident even today. We have often seen the images of violent, rampaging, neo-Nazi "skinheads" in today's Germany and heard the claim, on the basis of this evidence, that Germany was in danger of "going Nazi" again.¹ Even if this fantastic claim were true, surely the best indication of a future Nazi threat would be the prevalence of individuals working behind the scenes, using social and economic woes to further their own long-term plans. The same criteria must be applied in the U.S. Zone in the late 1940s.

There were indeed associations and loosely formed covert organizations of Nazis actively planning and attempting to bring about a new National Socialist form of government in post-war Germany. These people did not tend to be frustrated and bored youth. They were usually former Nazi officials and SS officers, often of senior rank. Many were in automatic arrest categories, although as the next chapter will suggest, there were ways of avoiding capture and even identification. As such, they were patient, intelligent, and - most importantly - ideologically committed, with a coherent vision of "their" future German state. These men - and by and large they were men - saw that by working within, or by not challenging the existing framework of the U.S. occupation, they could probably achieve some of their objectives. Some turned to organizing political parties. Others, as we shall see, formed underground organizations involved in various conspiracies to subvert the U.S. occupation, both from within and from without.²

Before examining the most highly organized underground operations, it would be

prudent to examine yet another level of resistance to the occupation. We have already established that there were at least two levels of pro-Nazi resistance to the Allied occupation: that of violent youth groups involved in direct action, and more sophisticated, covert and ideologically committed Nazis dedicated to the resuscitation of a proto-Nazi form of German government. However, there was also another tier of pro-Nazi activity that fell in between these two. This "middle level" of resistance must be discussed.

The groups and organizations falling into this "middle tier" included loosely organized associations of Nazis who attempted to subvert some specific aspect of the occupation. It was commonplace for these groups to attempt to restore various individual Nazis to their previous positions held during the Third Reich. This type of organization usually did not endeavour to restore Nazism *per se*, but was simply focused on overturning particular occupation policies. There was a variety of organizations that fit this category, from groups dedicated to economic sabotage, to groups promoting a German military spirit, to those devoted to preserving the Nazi concept of the leadership principle. It is valuable to note that these "mid-level" pro-Nazi organizations were generally perceived by the U.S. Military Government to be less of a threat than the blatant violence of the youth groups. More specifically, this "second tier" of pro-Nazi resistance, while more ideologically coherent and organized than the direct action groups, did not (in the view of American officials) pose as much of a physical threat to the goals and the everyday administration of the occupation. On the other side of the ledger, these second tier groups were not as sophisticated and committed to the complete "renazification" of Western Germany as were the large-scale, upper-level conspiracies. Despite these caveats, such organizations could not be completely ignored. It would be reasonable to suggest that these mid-level groups had some room to manoeuvre, with U.S. Intelligence's energies being directed elsewhere (i.e. toward the violent direct action groups and the larger-scale conspiracies). As we shall see, the limited goals of a group such as the U-7 meant that they were achievable to a certain degree.

The defining characteristic of several mid-level pro-Nazi groups was their tendency to focus on one particular aspect of either Nazi ideology or occupation policy, rather than trying to promote a complete restoration of Nazism. The *Gotenbund*, a fanatic, ultra-nationalist group found by the CIC to be active in Wiesbaden, Berlin, Russelsheim and Oberamstadt (near Darmstadt), is an example of this specificity of focus. The *Gotenbund* illustrated once again the difficulty of distinguishing between pro-Nazism and radical ultra-nationalism. Classifying the *Gotenbund* as a Nazi organization muddies the waters even further because this organization pre-dated the Nazi regime, having formed immediately after the First World War. As the CIC discovered, the *Gotenbund* had been founded to create a "German National Life" under the leadership of a privileged master group whose principles paralleled those of National Socialism. Indeed, these intimations of a *volkish* master race were fully congruous with Nazi views on the subject of German superiority. According to CIC, the *Gotenbund's* beliefs and ideals remained in 1947 the same as they had been at the organization's inception, unaltered by the cataclysm of the Second World War. The post-World War Two version of the *Gotenbund* was admittedly small, with secret meetings (in Wiesbaden at least) of only 20-25 persons.³ The organization's goal was to propagate the idea of "the pure leadership system and a class system of leaders and followers." Its metaphysical fellowship with Nazism is apparent especially with the role of myth and the almost spiritual idea of Aryan superiority and leadership. The *Gotenbund* espoused a type of Germanic tribalism that claimed that "(German) leaders are chosen from heaven to lead Europe out of chaos and misery to the divine Reich of the sun." Thus, while the *Gotenbund* predated the Third Reich, and the group's national leader had been imprisoned by the Nazis for 11 years for competing with the NSDAP, the *Gotenbund* could be said to share several Nazi ideals and goals. Although nothing substantive came of the *Gotenbund's* activities, it did have a clear view of what a future Germany would look like, although it lacked both the organizational strength and a practical strategy to bring about what would have amounted to an almost religious Nazi revival.⁴

The *Gruener Teufel* (Green Devil) was an organization somewhat similar to the *Gotenbund* in its goal of propagating a certain spirit or passion among Germans. In many ways, the *Gruener Teufel* anticipated the various German veterans' associations and "political action committees" that appeared in the early 1950s. It was a group that linked together members of the German First Parachute Division, which actually bore the nickname *Gruener Teufel*. This organization originated in the British Zone; by early 1947 it was active in the U.S. Zone as well. On the surface, *Gruener Teufel* seemed harmless enough. The organization merely appeared to consist of First Parachute veterans and their families, who were keeping in touch. No "overt subversive activity" (as CIC expressed it) was evident on the part of the *Gruener Teufel*. Despite this assessment, the *Gruener Teufel* attempted to keep not only their friendship alive, but also their dedication to militarism and the military spirit advocated by the adherents of Nazism. That said, does the *Gruener Teufel* qualify as a "mid-level", anti-occupation, pro-Nazi organization? By the criteria established earlier, the link is difficult but tenable. Although the *Gruener Teufel* took part in no overt anti-occupation activity, it did attempt to subvert the anti-militaristic nature of Germany under the Allied administration. The *Gruener Teufel* was pro-Nazi in the sense that its members saw their wartime service as glorious, and thus they sought to preserve the Third Reich's glorification of the military ethos. Where the link between the *Gruener Teufel* and people working for a resurrection of Nazism becomes tentative is in the scope of the *Teufel's* actions. While this group strove to keep the militaristic spirit alive, it did not actively work to expand its influence and extend militarism throughout German society as a whole. The *Gotenbund* and the *Gruener Teufel* were indeed anti-occupation and did have a vision of a Germany that embraced important aspects of the Nazi philosophy, although their goals were never realized and they had little impact on German society. After World War Two, western Germany never re-emerged as a militaristic nation with any palpable sense of mythic German superiority and "Aryan" duty.⁵

While the *Gotenbund* and the *Gruener Teufel* did not see their goals come close to

being realized, other groups on this "second tier" of pro-Nazi anti-occupation resistance did in fact see some of their wishes become reality. Significantly, the degree to which *their actions* brought about this fulfilment was usually negligible. The U-7 organization, discovered by CIC in September of 1946 in *Landkreis* Regen, fit this description. U-7 was found to have connections with officials of the local *Landrat's* office. The U-7 group directed its energies against the denazification of the civil service and other local government administrators. In effect, U-7 had a clear and intelligible goal: to reinstate Nazi officials and administrators and thus renazify the German bureaucracy. The battle plan of U-7 was as follows: U-7 would engage in economic and political sabotage against the civil administration set up by the U.S. military government, thus disrupting the governing of *Kreis* Regen. The result, U-7 hoped, would be dissatisfaction among the general populace with the Allied civil administration. This in turn, it was surmised, would lead to demands for the appointment of efficient administrative personnel, thus forcing the Military Government to re-employ some former Nazi officials and release others from internment camps. The ultimate goal was a complete reversal of the denazification of the civil service.⁶

U-7's increased level of sophistication (as opposed to the youthful direct action groups) was indicated by the fact that it secretly had members working in government offices, thus giving the group significant contacts at higher levels. At first, CIC had only suspicions to go on, as suspected U-7 government officials repeatedly claimed that they could not accomplish their work successfully due to the lack of trained personnel. These officials also raised suspicion by loudly demanding a complete revision of denazification policy. Suspicion turned to confirmation on July 14, 1947, when German police, under the supervision of OMGUS, arrested 19 members of the U-7 groups in *Kreis* Regen, Bodenmais, Kirchdorf and Buchenau. Among those arrested were Werner Hass, the *Landrat* of *Kreis* Regen; Baptist Zellner, who was an official of the *Landrat's* office; as well as the *Bürgermeister* of Bodenmais. Authorities found several incriminating documents linking U-7 to some pro-Nazi organizations. Hass was found to have applied

for membership in the SD (the security service of the SS), and he was a member of an intelligence network for a faction of the CSU that was working against Military Government and was sympathetic to Nazi ideas. The *Bürgermeister* of Bodenmais - who had reportedly opposed denazification by personally threatening Germans who were to testify in *Spruchkammern* - was found to possess original NSDAP membership records for *Kreis* Regen. The raid on the U-7 leaders effectively confined the membership and curtailed the activities of the organization.⁷

Although U-7 was uncovered and stamped out by Military Government in 1947, its objectives were, for the most part, realized. By the time of the advent of the FRG in 1949, many of the civil administrators who had served under the Nazi regime had been subtly reinstated. The renazification of the West German civil service would continue throughout the Adenauer years. Whether or not the U-7 conspirators themselves could realistically claim any responsibility for beginning this process is highly dubious, especially given the fact that the group appeared to be strictly regional. The fact remains however, that U-7's wishes had been fulfilled. By 1950, 85% of previously removed Nazi officials in Bavaria had been reinstated, and 60% of the civil service of Baden-Württemberg was comprised of ex-Nazis.⁸ This massive reinstatement of purged Nazi-era civil servants had a snowball effect, as denazification officials became social outcasts and former Nazis in official positions gave jobs to other old Nazis. In the end, the reasoning of groups like U-7 proved to be correct, even if their strategy and actions were relatively ineffective. U.S. officials were faced with an overwhelming administrative task, as denazification forced them to use inexperienced and unqualified Germans throughout the administrative bureaucracy. Even without any type of sabotage akin to the U-7 strategy, the existing system became inefficient and chaotic. Eventually, Military Government was forced to re-hire many Germans who had been civil administrators during the Nazi era. Once the door to reinstatement and reemployment was open, a snowball effect was almost a certainty.

There were other mysterious, often nameless pro-Nazi groups on this second tier

of resistance, some of whom eventually saw their goals conceded by U.S. Military Government. Some groups expressed anti-Bolshevik beliefs, and more importantly, spoke of the mythical duty of the Germanic peoples to “liberate” Europe from the yoke of Soviet Bolshevism. The quarrel between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union only served to validate the *raison d’être* of such groups. An example of this type of anti-Soviet, pseudo-Nazi propaganda activity was evident in 1947 in the Bayreuth area, where escaped and discharged German POWs from the Soviet Zone organized and distributed pamphlets stating the following:

German compatriots, German PWs (prisoners of war), when you return to your homes don’t forget to tell your neighbours about the miseries, mistreatment and suppression you suffered in Russia. Tell them how many Germans are still in Russian hands, how they suffer and how they long for Germany, how convinced they are that Hitler was right after all in his opinion of the devilish Soviet regime. Tell them how Soviet Russia is prepared to pick a new quarrel and swallow the misled Western powers... Inform the population of the occupied zones that we, the new SS force, the revived Teutonic Order of the 20th Century, will fulfil its mission by regaining the lost German provinces... Let your German friends know that the breakdown of the forthcoming Moscow conference will be the beginning of the rebirth of Germany. The disagreement will be of overwhelming benefits to us, and there is not the slightest doubt that there will be another war in 6 months.⁹

Although this “glorious Germanic struggle” (as the pamphlet termed it) never materialized, those officers who had served on the Eastern Front and had knowledge of life behind Soviet lines were fertile ground for U.S. intelligence organizations seeking operatives in their covert, peacetime struggle against the Soviet bloc. Through the auspices of the CIA and other western intelligence services, these anti-Soviet Nazi sympathizers were able to carry out their messianic struggle against the “devilish Soviet regime” in the service of the western world and thus, by extension, the “Germanic tribe.”¹⁰

Significantly, however, not all "mid-level" anti-occupation forces in the U.S. zone were sympathetic to Nazism. Some left-wing organizations were also opposed to the occupation, or at least were seen in such a light by American authorities. The *Gross Deutsch Adler* organization reported in Kassel in mid-1947 fit this description. Like most pro-Nazi organizations, this group was reportedly composed of former members of the SS, SA, *Wehrmacht* and paratroop units. Allegedly, their goals were to strengthen the KPD in the U.S. zone and to indoctrinate the German public with what the CIC called "Communistic ideals". This organization also reportedly included some U.S. army personnel and Soviet nationals. That the SS, the vanguard of Nazism, could reputedly include members that were (as U.S. intelligence described them) "communistically inclined" suggests three things. First, the reliability of U.S. intelligence's categorization of "Nazis" and "Communists" was often questionable. Second, the anti-communist fervour that began to take root in 1947 often coloured the U.S. view of "resistance," as fears of communist subversion overtook fears of Nazi subversion (although some old Nazis *did* align themselves with communist organizations). And finally, one must emphasize the complexity of the issues involved in Nazism and anti-occupation resistance created a very murky political environment. The fact that both the West and the Soviets made use of formerly fervent Nazi officials in their intelligence organizations, along with the fact that anti-occupation movements rose from both the left and the right, confuses the identification of the truly pro-Nazi groups even further. Still, there *were* distinguishably pro-Nazi, anti-occupation movements that sought to reinstate various aspects of the Third Reich. This is clear not so much from the U.S. *categorization* of them as Nazis as it is from an examination of the goals and activities of these groups.¹¹

It is obvious that the second tier resistance movements such as U-7 and the *Gotenbund* formed a greater threat to the democratic future of western Germany than aimlessly violent pro-Nazi youth. Still, the goals of U-7 and the *Gotenbund* were limited to overturning specific areas of Allied rule. Other groups, however, were far more organized, efficient and ideologically committed to a rebirth of the Germany that existed

from 1933 to 1945. This became clear by early 1947, with the culmination of several months of joint British-American surveillance of a diverse, highly organized underground network of Nazis. This conspiracy, known as the *Deutsche Revolution*, was composed of a number of loosely connected groups made up of former high-ranking officials of the SS, SA and other Nazi bodies. For the most part, these organizations were based in the U.S. and British zones, although they also had several contacts in both the French and Soviet zones. After months of surveillance, both U.S. and British intelligence had concluded that these organizations were connected by one common aim: to build a single powerful German organization combining the disparate elements and characteristics of the old Nazi state forbidden by Allied authorities. This group would eventually promote itself as the true representative of the new Germany and would embrace a pan-Western European type of Nazism, outwardly devoid of the most reprehensible aspects of Hitler's Nazism, such as the genocidal racism. According to OMGUS, this network was "highly nationalistic" and its leaders had planned eventually to contact one of the participants in a future East-West conflict. Under the auspices of either the Soviet Union or the western powers - so the plan went - a new manifestation of Nazi Germany would be created, with the leaders of the *Deutsche Revolution* at the helm. This new Germany would then play the role of junior partner and would fight on the side of either the Soviets or the West.¹²

The Western Allies had first become aware of this mass network of conspirators in early 1946, and from that point onward kept constant surveillance of certain members of the underground. U.S. intelligence subsequently claimed that the situation was well in hand, and that the British and Americans simply were watching the *Deutsche Revolution* until "it was considered to have developed as far as permissible without endangering the security of the Occupation powers."¹³ This permissibility came to an abrupt halt at 2:30 AM on February 22, 1947 when security agencies in the British and American zones launched a coordinated raid, known as Operation Selection Board, that effectively crushed the *Deutsche Revolution* network. The details of the raid were given in a EUCOM Intelligence Summary dated February 27, 1947. According to Allied intelligence, 63

persons were arrested in the British Zone and 30 in the American Zone, among them most of the leading personalities of the various organizations making up the *Deutsche Revolution*. Subsequent reports indicated that approximately 85% of the network's membership was captured, effectively breaking the back of the movement. As if to prove to doubters both at home, within Germany, and abroad, that the U.S. Military Government would not tolerate any attempt to resuscitate the spectre of Nazism, the arrests made during Operation Selection Board were revealed to the public. By mid-1947, U.S. Military Government was claiming that "the lack of recent active subversion is attributed to the widely publicized arrests in Operation Selection Board."¹⁴

The *Deutsche Revolution* network provides the clearest example of a pro-Nazi movement that combined effective political and military organization, a clear and coherent ideological commitment to the basic tenets of Nazism, and a definite plan of action committed to restoring some semblance of a National Socialist Germany. Significantly, full analysis of the *Deutsche Revolution* had to await the declassification of various U.S. and British intelligence reports in the last 10-15 years. Even an historian such as Tauber - whose wealth of information and analysis on every aspect of post-war German nationalism made his work *the* preeminent study of German neo-Nazi movements in the 15-20 years following World War Two - speaks barely a word of the *Deutsche Revolution*. In recent years Perry Biddiscombe has turned the microscope on the *Deutsche Revolution*, its leaders, and its goals. His findings are key to understanding the real threat of this well-organized pro-Nazi movement.

The men behind the *Deutsche Revolution* presented a stark contrast to those behind the direct action groups, as well as those involved in U-7, the *Gruener Teufel*, and the *Gotenbund*. Most of the *Deutsche Revolution* leaders were highly intelligent, disciplined and determined men devoted to Nazism in one form or another, unlike, for example, the often oafish and immature members of the direct action groups. As Biddiscombe has illustrated, the *Deutsche Revolution* network featured an eclectic combination of leaders. The intellectual godfather of this resistance movement was Dr.

Bernhard Gericke, a 37-year-old, upper-middle class historian who had been an SS-*Oberscharführer* (Staff Sergeant) during the war, and had become a town councillor in late 1945. It was Gericke who provided much of the ideological impetus for the *Deutsche Revolution*. This “Gerickian” Nazi philosophy combined a Western European internationalism with the traditional Nazi ideals of discipline, militarism and the *Führerprinzip*. Open attack and revolt against the Allied military governments was dismissed as suicidal. The ultimate goal of this “new” Nazi philosophy was to create, in effect, an underground German shadow government, complete with political and military leadership, an armed Freikorps and an independent intelligence agency. When the proper time came, this new Nazi elite would - so the plan went - broker an alliance with the dominant Western European power (Great Britain) to form a united western front against the eastern threat. At this point, so Gericke’s thinking ran, this shadow government would emerge and become the official leadership of a new crypto-National Socialist Germany. Biddiscombe has raised the question of whether this plot was necessarily intended to align Germany with the Western Powers. In fact, U.S. Intelligence clearly felt that the *Deutsche Revolution* would offer its services to the highest bidder, and might just as easily look for an alliance with the Soviets.¹⁵

The wide-ranging elements forming the *Deutsche Revolution* network obviously meant that a variety of disparate individuals were involved at the operational levels of the various subgroups. Some groups had their fingers, so to speak, in every pie. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, many of these same groups played a vital role in operating the underground railways that delivered numerous Nazis to safety, including such infamous figures as Adolf Eichmann and Joseph Mengele. Many of those involved at the various levels of this network, such as Klaus Barbie, the “Butcher of Lyons”, would become familiar names in future years. A man named Christof Naumann organized and led one of the two large subgroups of the *Deutsche Revolution* in the U.S. zone. He was a fascinating character who sought to establish an intelligence network of ex-SS men, German nationalists and Allied sympathizers. The bulk of Naumann’s

underlings were ex-SS and *Abwehr* officers. Among Naumann's allies was Barbie, who headed a well-armed and potentially violent espionage unit. This movement was committed not simply to creating a Nazi government, but to rebuilding a Nazi *Kultur*. This is clear for example, from Naumann's contacts with German professors who were sympathetic to Nazism. Through these associations Naumann hoped to subvert the post-secondary educational system of Western Germany, starting with Göttingen University, where most of "his" professors worked.¹⁶

The other large U.S. Zone subgroup was called the *Organisation Süddeutschland* and was led by Kurt Ellersiek, a former *Obersturmführer* in the *Waffen-SS*. Ellersiek was a skilled organizer and had hoped to create a leadership cadre that would build and lead a new National Socialist youth movement. Clearly, the *Deutsche Revolution* network included groups wanting not only political and military renazification, but cultural and social renazification as well.¹⁷

Obviously, it is vital this discussion to explore the possibility that a Germany led by a new Nazi elite in partnership with the West was ever given serious consideration by U.S. intelligence and Military Government. As Biddiscombe has illustrated in some detail, extensive contacts between underground *Deutsche* operatives and the British were made. What of the Americans however? Though we will obviously never know the private thoughts of the top U.S. officials, it is now widely acknowledged that the CIA and other American agencies made use of men such as Barbie as sources of intelligence during the Cold War.¹⁸ In pursuing such goals, American intelligence helped many of these men escape from Germany, although this is not the issue at hand here. The *Deutsche Revolution* network in the U.S. Zone never came to any agreement with the American occupation government. Obviously, contacts were made with various CIC operatives, leading to infiltration of the network and its consequent destruction on the night of February 22. The key issue, however is whether the *Deutsche Revolution, as a whole*, ever came close to initiating sympathetic contacts with the U.S. Military Government. Simply put, the answer is no, at least not according to the available

evidence. Obviously Barbie and others were used as foot soldiers in the Cold War, but there is no substantive evidence that suggests that the *Deutsche Revolution* network itself was ever treated in any way as an ally by occupation authorities.¹⁹

We must assess the legacy of the *Deutsche Revolution*, and more importantly, how much of a threat the network was in terms of reinstating Nazism. Unlike the case of the U-7 group, it cannot be claimed that the *Deutsche Revolution*'s goals or wishes were in any way fulfilled. Whereas U-7 was simply working for the renazification of the bureaucracy - which occurred to some limited extent - the *Deutsche Revolution* wanted true cultural and political renazification as well. While West Germany did indeed become a junior partner in the Western alliance against the Soviet bloc, as a nation it bore no resemblance to the new Nazi state envisioned by Gericke, Naumann, Ellersiek and other neo-Nazis. This is not to suggest however, that the *Deutsche Revolution* posed no threat of a Nazi revival. On the contrary, the *Deutsche Revolution* network was a greater and more pervasive threat than the youth-oriented direct action groups, U-7, the *Gruener Teufel*, or the *Gotenbund* could ever hoped to have been. One obviously cannot say with any certainty what would have happened if Operation Selection Board had never taken place, although a few points are evident. For one, these men were determined, thoroughly organized and clear in their objectives. In addition, there was a significant element in the general population that would have supported such a movement. In the future, the already considerable cultural contacts the *Deutsche Revolution* had fostered could only have increased. With the impending drive toward West German independence and the American preoccupation with the "Soviet threat," by 1948 or 1949 the *Deutsche Revolution* may have become too deeply entrenched to be crushed with a few raids. Without the strong measures taken in early 1947, it is highly probable that this pro-Nazi organization would have eventually posed a grave threat to West German democracy.²⁰

What must be concluded from this chapter's discussion is that despite claims to the contrary, organizations that actively sought to recreate Nazi Germany in its basic form did indeed exist in post-war Germany. In the past, such scenarios have usually been

relegated to the world of popular fiction, although it is clear that two of the options taken up by unreformed Nazis during the *Stunde Null* were resistance and the attempt to renazify Germany politically, socially, militarily and culturally.

NOTES

1. As put forth by Geoffrey Roberts in "Right Wing Radicalism in the New Germany" in Parliamentary Affairs 45(3), July, 1992, p. 327.
2. In fact, some people involved in the underground conspiracies became involved in later years with such political parties as the SRP.
3. CIC seemed to have determined only the size of the Wiesbaden membership.
4. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 12, 17 July 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA. The *Gotenbund* was by no means unique in its pre-1933 ancestry. Several *völkisch* and ultra-nationalist groups formed in Germany and Austria before, during and after WW I. Several of these groups, although having differences with some aspects of Nazi ideology, found themselves drawn to the Nazi Party. For examples of this, see Bracher, The German Dictatorship, pp. 45-48, 50-57 and Johnpeter Horst Grill, The Nazi Movement in Baden, 1920-1945, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), pp. 20-54.
5. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 2 27 Feb. 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
6. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 12 17 July, 1947; No. 13 1 August, 1947. both in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
7. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 13 1 August 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
8. Douglas Botting, In the Ruins of the Reich. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 201.
9. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 4 27 March 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00110 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
10. Ibid.
11. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 13 1 August 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA. Perhaps the apparent readiness of some ex-Nazis to "join the communist camp" goes back to the days of the left-right split in the NSDAP. The post-war expressions of left-wing sympathies, even (reputedly) among some SS men, may have had its roots in the "Strasserite" wing of the pre-1933

- Nazi Party. Peter D. Stachura, "The Nazis, the Bourgeoisie, and the Workers during the *Kampfzeit*" in The Nazi Machtergreifung, p.23.
12. EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 2 27 February 1947. State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
13. Ibid.
14. FORD "Weekly Background Notes" No. 83 6 March 1947, FO 371/64389 PRO: EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" No. 2 27 February 1947; No. 9 5 June 1947 both in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
15. Biddiscombe, "Operation Selection Board: The Growth and Suppression of the Neo-Nazi 'Deutsche Revolution' 1945-47" in Intelligence and National Security, vol. 11, No. 1 (January, 1996), pp. 61-62; EUCOM "Intelligence Summary" no. 2 27 February 1947 in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
16. Biddiscombe, "Operation Selection Board." p. 65.
17. Ibid, pp. 65-66.
18. Christopher Simpson. Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and its Effects on the Cold War, (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988). pp. 4-5.
19. Although there is no tangible evidence of American Military Government cultivating the *Deutsche Revolution* subgroups as allies. Biddiscombe does note that in 1984, Barbie's CIC controller, Erhard Debringhaus claimed that "the occupation leaders" - whether or not this included the Americans is unclear - did indeed hope to form an alliance with the network. Debringhaus claimed that there was a months-long working relationship between the Allies and the underground subgroups, which soured when the Allies saw that the only result was the protection of thousands of German war criminals. Biddiscombe, "Operation Selection Board" p. 73.
20. Most importantly, the *Deutsche Revolution* fit many of the general characteristics of European resistance movements, as laid out by historians such as Jorgen Haestrop. These common traits were: a high level of internal organization, and the fact that in general, such movements carried out a variety of resistance-related activities (such as establishing escape routes, undertaking sabotage, creating intelligence services, and setting up a political organization). Jorgen Haestrop, European Resistance Movements, 1939-45: A Complete History, (London: Meckler Publishing, 1981), pp. 16-17.

CHAPTER 5: The Nazi Underground Railways

The use of the term “underground railway” to describe the means by which many Nazis secretly escaped Germany at the end of the war is particularly ironic. This term originated of course, as a description of the northern escape routes taken by a number of African-American slaves both before and during the U.S. Civil War. There is obviously no moral equivalency between the fleeing members of the so-called “master race” and oppressed slaves, hence the curiosity of the definition “underground railway.” The term “ratlines”, also used to describe this phenomenon, was originally used to describe the clandestine movements of operatives in and out of hostile and foreign territory.¹ In the literature on escaping Nazis, “ratlines” has generally connoted outside assistance, whereas I am primarily interested in the *German* role in getting Nazis out of Germany and to freedom.

In recent years, a common strategy in much of the relevant literature has been to emphasize the predominant role played by Western intelligence agencies, such as the OSS/CIA and MI9, in recruiting important Nazis and getting them out of Germany. Without a doubt, the temptation to use men such as Klaus Barbie as intelligence tools in the impending ideological-geopolitical struggle with the Soviets often won the day. The Western intelligence agencies were one of the driving forces behind the success of this Nazi exodus, although it would be an error to claim that the Germans were merely pawns or fortunate opportunists. I am interested in the actions of Nazis who escaped, although the more fascinating story is that of the Nazis who chose to remain in Germany to help their comrades get away. These men were obviously dedicated to more than simple self-preservation. Perhaps a sense of comradeship was their motivation, but I suspect it went deeper. Accordingly, the thrust of this chapter is to uncover and analyze the level of *German* participation in the operation of underground railways. More specifically, it will attempt to examine the degree to which pro-Nazi Germans helped Nazi war criminals escape. I will examine which underground organizations took part in the operation of the underground railways, as well as the depth of this activity (e.g., whether secret

underground groups were primarily responsible, or whether ordinary Germans and legitimate organizations participated). And finally, we must examine the historical significance of German participation in running the underground railways.

Up until the declassification of various British and American intelligence files in the last 20 years, the existence of Nazi underground railways was not widely acknowledged. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, even scholars who acknowledged the renazification of the West German bureaucracy and the obvious escape of several high-ranking and notorious Nazis were reluctant to acknowledge the work of such well-organized underground railways. One example of this was the German-born historian John Dornberg, who claimed in 1961 that Nazism was not yet completely purged from German politics and society. Despite this idea of a "schizophrenic Germany" - to borrow the title of his book on this subject - Dornberg dismissed any suggestions that post-war underground organizations had been geared to helping high-ranking Nazis escape. Dornberg argued that those Nazis who did flee abroad simply used some ingenuity and personal contacts in order to escape to friendly countries, such as Egypt, Franco's Spain and Peron's Argentina. Dornberg attributed talk of massive underground organizations to rumours put forth in 1945 and spread by the Nazis themselves. The apparent argument here was that these "rumours" were a vain attempt to keep hope alive for the survival of some semblance of Nazism, or even of the regime itself. In this context, the reasoning of the Nazi government was that if "loyal" Germans thought that many of their leaders were free and still organized, they would resist the Allies with every remaining ounce of strength, thus making occupation more unpalatable. Dornberg claimed that by 1949 these rumours and discussions about the Nazi underground had disappeared.²

At the time, the concerns of Dornberg and other like-minded people were understandable. Some analysts probably feared endowing their topic with a comic-book flavour, in which secret Nazi organizations flourished, Nazi hideouts contained hoarded treasure, and Hitler was alive and well in Argentina, Paraguay or some other South

American enclave. The opening of relevant files covering the immediate post-war era, however, confirmed many matters previously only suspected. There were, it turned out, genuine organized escape routes which had allowed a number of Nazis to flee, among them some of the more infamous murderers of their time.

Before looking at the various underground Nazi groups that facilitated the escape of Nazis from occupied Germany, we must briefly examine legitimate organizations that played a key role. Without doubt one of the most fascinating examples in this regard was the Catholic Church. In recent years the Church's actions and inactions during the Holocaust have been a matter of passionate contention. The debate still rages over Pope Pius XII. For some he was an anti-semite whose true sympathies lay with Nazis rather than Jews. For others he was a naive and overcautious pontiff, sympathetic toward the plight of the Jews but concerned about the Church's precarious position in a Europe divided into two opposing camps. More pertinent to this study, however, is an analysis of the post-war activities of some of the German officials and priests within the Church, specifically, the way in which some Catholic German clergymen helped Nazi war criminals escape to freedom. The role of a few German priests in these undertakings is part of a larger issue, and provides an important part of the picture of pro-Nazi activity within Germany from 1945-49. The actions of these priests may have been a reflection of the strength of the Nazi ideal in Germany after the war. More specifically, we must ascertain what affiliations were most powerful within the hearts and minds of some German clergy: their Catholicism or their devotion to the Fatherland (and in essence their devotion to the dominant ideology of Germany's recent history).

John Loftus and Mark Aarons have provided much of the framework for an historical study of the relationship between the Catholic Church and Nazism, both during and after the war. Loftus and Aarons have covered the full scope of the Vatican's role in the operation of the underground railways. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of their research focuses on one Bishop Alois Hudal, Rector of the Pontificia Santa Maria dell'Aninca (one of three seminaries for German priests in Rome). According to Loftus

and Aarons, Hudal was the most prominent of several pro-Nazi German priests and bishops who used their influence - and allegedly, in some cases stolen Nazi treasures - to help operate and finance the underground railways, or "ratlines." In their opinion, Hudal did not innocently and accidentally fall into giving aid to escaping Nazis, but specifically targeted Nazis hiding among the masses of refugees and DPs.³

It is clear that Hudal was a leading figure in the smuggling of Nazis to safety. Testimony about Hudal's role was given by, among others, Franz Stangl, Commandant at Treblinka, one of the more notorious concentration camps. According to Stangl:

It was Hudal who arranged quarters in Rome where I was to stay until my papers came through. And he gave me a bit more money-I had almost nothing left. After several weeks, Hudal called me in and gave me my new passport-a Red Cross passport...he got me an entrance visa to Syria and a job in a textile mill in Damascus, and he gave me a ticket for the ship. So I went to Syria.⁴

Considerable evidence suggests that Hudal was not simply one man giving aid to the odd fellow German. Simon Wiesenthal, the famous 'Nazi hunter', believes that Hudal headed a sophisticated Vatican network that smuggled out such Nazis as Stangl, Gustav Wagner (Commandant at Sobibor), Alois Brunner and Adolf Eichmann (often described as the "chief engineer" of the Final Solution).⁵ Wiesenthal also believes that the network operated, if not with Pius XII's participation, at least with his full knowledge and blessing.⁶ It is beyond any reasonable doubt that Hudal was an anti-semite, if not a full-fledged Nazi sympathizer. Hudal's predilections were evident in a revealing statement he made assessing his participation in the Vatican underground escape routes:

To help people, to save a few, without thinking of the consequences, working selflessly and with determination was naturally what should have been expected of a true Christian. We do not believe in the eye for an eye *of the Jew* (italics mine).⁷

This statement could be interpreted by some simply as an obvious (and expected) reaffirmation of Christ's teachings of forgiveness and his rejection of revenge. I believe, however that this quote of Hudal's must be taken in the full context of his actions. I would simply make two points: first, the last three words of his statement immediately differentiates between "us" and "them", suggesting a kinship not with Jews, but with their oppressors. "We do not believe in the eye for an eye of the Jew" appears (in print at least) to project a feeling of disdain. Second, Hudal's Christian sympathies of forgiveness apparently did not extend to the victims of Nazism, especially Communists.

Hudal represents a psychological reaction that is the source of a recurrent question in this thesis: was he a *Nazi* sympathizer, or was he a somewhat misguided (and anti-semitic) German patriot seeking only to assist individuals who had "served their country"? Add the fact that Hudal was a high ranking *Vatican* official during the onset of the Cold War and yet another consideration jumps out at us. Could Hudal's anti-semitism and his sympathy toward escaping Nazis have been indicative of the Vatican's views rather than the views of any significant proportion of Germans? We must remember that the Catholic Church had a millennium-old history of official anti-semitism far pre-dating the existence of Nazism or even of Germany itself.⁸ Considering, in addition the Church's fears of "atheistic communism", it could be argued that Hudal's actions were more indicative of sentiments within the Vatican than of German patriotic sympathies. In fact, the considerable number of non-German Catholic officials involved in the smuggling of Nazis to safety has been well documented. A Catholic lay group called the Intermarium - which was composed of both Germans and non-Germans - was very prominent in the late 1940s and early 1950s in smuggling Nazis out of both eastern and western Europe.⁹ Finally, before asserting any strong association between factions of the Catholic Church and the activities of *German* Nazis after the war, we should note that many of the people who escaped by way of the Vatican turned out to be Eastern European collaborators.¹⁰

While non-German organizations played a considerable role in helping important

Nazis escape, Nazis inside Germany were not exactly passive bystanders. In fact, Christopher Simpson believes that “the ratlines in which the U.S. and Vatican later became entangled in were pre-existing and unsanctioned Nazi escape routes set up at the end of the war.”¹¹ As the American archival records have revealed, Nazi underground organizations did indeed help facilitate the escape of many wanted Nazi war criminals. We have, in earlier chapters, already become acquainted with some of these groups, which, up until sweeping U.S.-British crackdowns, played a predominant role in operating the underground railways.

Several loosely interconnected Nazi-organized escape routes existed, which provided paths out of occupied Germany. There were three primary destinations: Spain, the Middle East and South America. In these areas fleeing Nazis found sympathetic, often anti-semitic, pro-Nazi governments. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of people manning the German escape routes came from the ranks of the HJ and the SS, which comes as no surprise. As cruel and evil as these men could be, some of them were also highly intelligent and disciplined, and once the writing was on the wall, they started making plans for their post-war future. As for the HJ participants, their activities actually became one of the few publicized instances of pro-Nazi underground activity in the mid to late 1940s. News about a so-called HJ conspiracy flew in the faces of critics who had steadfastly denied the existence of organized Nazi escape routes out of Germany after 1945.

The tale of the HJ conspiracy is a fascinating one, and it clearly illustrates one type of activity on the part of unreformed Nazis. OMGUS intelligence did not consider this large group of conspirators to be subversive in the sense that groups attempting to resurrect Nazi Germany were subversive. Still, it was obvious that a large underground network that transported suspected war criminals out of Germany constituted, in effect, a direct attack on the occupation regime’s goals and authority. The basic aim of this association of ex-HJ personnel was to provide safe passage out of Germany for important Nazis. The winter of 1945/46 marked the high point of the HJ network’s

activity in both the British and American zones.¹²

The plot was hatched, for the most part, by HJ leaders Arthur Axmann and Willi Hiedemann. The sheer scale of action and numbers of conspirators separated this operation from many others. Whereas the majority of pro-Nazi underground movements involved less than a hundred participants, and in many cases only a dozen or so, the HJ conspiracy numbered nearly a thousand members operating throughout the American and British zones. Axmann had commanded a battalion of HJ in battle near the end of April 1945 and on May 1 he had escaped to join the remnants of another HJ group in the Bavarian Alps. It was from this group that Axmann would find many operatives in the HJ underground railway system. Axmann was arrested in December of 1945, although he and Heidemann had already organized the means of escape for several Nazis. Axmann and his associates had contacted businessmen who in years past, had close links with the Nazi Party. These businessmen funded and provided employment to Axmann's conspirators. These jobs served as a cover for the plotters, allowing them to travel between occupation zones in both Germany and Austria. Some historians have contended that these businessmen were not necessarily Nazi supporters, but that the businessmen were afraid of the Nazis, not of violent attack but of exposure of the past associations between these business leaders and Nazis.¹³ Thus, some compromised individuals were essentially blackmailed into helping the Axmann-Heidemann network. Among the cover jobs attained by these young Nazis were trucking jobs. Under the appearance of operating legitimate trucking companies, the HJ network transported former Nazis out of Germany to safety.¹⁴

When the British and Americans got wind of the HJ conspiracy, Operation Nursery was launched, culminating in March 1946 with the arrests of almost a thousand suspects, the neutralization of the trucking firms and the effective destruction of the network.¹⁵ This operation, along with the spring 1946 crackdown on the *Edelweiss Piraten*, and Operation Selection Board in 1947, meant that two things were certain. On the one hand, in the first two years of the post-war era, OMGUS's and U.S. counter-intelligence's

overall determination to crush all pro-Nazi activity was unquestionable. On the other hand, Nazi activity *was* a legitimate source of concern and was far more prevalent than has generally been acknowledged. In fact, Operation Nursery did not end Nazi organization of the underground railways: it had merely caused a shift in the source and scale of such activity.

With the general removal of the HJ from the escape business, there was no longer any large-scale Nazi operation devoted *strictly* to the operation of underground railways. This is not to say however, that this activity had diminished to the point of irrelevance. When the HJ conspirators were thwarted, the SS, in effect, picked up the ball. This link between the SS and the HJ was not coincidental. Rempel notes that the HJ and the SS often worked hand in hand, especially near the end of the war, when youthful battalions comprised primarily of HJ were commanded by SS officers.¹⁶ As we saw, it was the SS that organized and trained most of the prospective Werewolves near the end of the war. The link between the SS and the HJ is not surprising, given the basic similarities in the *raison d'être* of each organization. Although HJ membership was eventually compulsory, Hitler had intended the HJ to become the training ground for the best and the brightest youth that the "Aryan" race had to offer. The HJ were to be moulded into Germanic youth in its idealized form. Similarly, the SS had originated as Hitler's elite guard, also the best and the brightest. Both the SS and the HJ were held up as the highest manifestations of Germanic pride, the elite of an elite nation. It was assumed that many HJ would one day join the ranks of the SS, continuing in their roles as "natural leaders." Given the interconnected intent of the SS and the HJ, and their close proximity in the last weeks of the war, the involvement of both in organizing and managing the underground railways was hardly shocking.¹⁷

Otto Skorzeny's *Die Spinne* ("The Spider") organization was typical of the type of SS underground railway active in the post-war years. *Die Spinne* was at heart a secret association of ex-SS men put together by Skorzeny, himself an SS colonel and commando extraordinaire. *Die Spinne's* basic objective was to help get former SS comrades out of

Germany to safety abroad, primarily to Spain and the Middle East.¹⁸ This group was put together near the end of the war, before Skorzeny surrendered to the Allies, and indicative of its strong organization *Die Spinne* apparently operated even while Skorzeny was in Allied custody. It has been suggested that Skorzeny supported *Die Spinne* with funds stolen from a Berlin Reichsbank, although this was never proven.¹⁹

Die Spinne and several other SS groups operating the underground railways are significant because, despite Allied intelligence claims, these groups *were* subversive to the core. What differentiated Skorzeny's group from the HJ conspiracy, Bishop Hudal's network and several other similar groups was that the ultimate goal was not merely escape and sanctuary for Nazi comrades, but the protection of the future elite of a reborn Nazi Reich.²⁰ For some Nazis, the preservation of the would-be leaders of a "Fourth Reich" took on post-apocalyptic tones, derived from an anticipation of East-West nuclear confrontation. Tauber has called this "qualified emigration":

...that is, the planned withdrawal, from areas potentially most exposed to atomic detonation, of carefully selected key nationalists or Nazis who might become necessary to a purified National Socialism after a Third World War had swept away both the liberal-capitalist regimes of the West and the state-capitalist, Communist regimes of the East. In the meantime it was hoped, the members of this salvaged elite would contribute to the strengthening of authoritarianism and social nationalism in their host countries.²¹

This association between the underground railways and the plan to build a new Nazi Germany was certainly evident after Operation Selection Board in February 1947. The various groups comprising the *Deutsche Revolution* that was crushed by Selection Board were involved in a plethora of activities, including fostering the escape of important Nazis. The operation of underground railways by segments of the *Deutsche Revolution* network appeared, in U.S. and British eyes, to fit into the group's overall scheme for a Nazi resurrection in a new Germany, to be supported by preserving the

Nazi elite. Presumably the fleeing Nazis would eventually return to form the vanguard of a reborn Nazi state. Given the *Deutsche Revolution's* clear ideological vision of a new "purified" Nazi state, and given its organization and determination, these escape routes take on a significance above and beyond simple avoidance of war crimes prosecution. Clearly, *Die Spinne* and the *Deutsche Revolution* provide convincing examples of the connections between SS-operated escape routes and attempts to revive Nazi Germany in the first years of the post-war period.²²

Not even after Operation Selection Board did the Nazi-operated underground railways collapse. In November 1947, yet another Nazi-run underground railway was discovered by Danish authorities. The leading organizer of this route was ex-Lieutenant-Colonel Günther Toepke, the former second-in command of German forces in Denmark. After the war Toepke had found employment in Denmark as the chief of a German civilian labour organization and had used his position to help several German scientists and aircraft engineers escape to Argentina.²³

Inside Germany the situation was similar. In fact, just a few weeks after the much-publicized crushing of the *Deutsche Revolution*, the arrest of one Ernst Fischer in Kempten revealed that the underground railways were still running. Fischer was arrested for possessing forged identification documents, and under interrogation admitted to being a liaison for an underground SS movement. The 970th CIC were convinced that this movement extended throughout the Western zones of Germany, with offices in Lindau in the French zone. Indeed, there was some suspicion that the French Zone was but a sieve, through which many Nazis escaped. The overriding purpose of this group, it was believed, was to transport SS officers to Spain, where there had been repeated rumours that SS units were rebuilding and planning to "liberate" Germany.²⁴

In early June of 1947, yet another group suspected of helping Nazis escape to Spain was discovered. This organization, called the "Greater Germany Group," operated out of Munich and was reportedly led by a former SS general using the alias "Herse." This "Greater Germany" organization was apparently an offshoot of a similar group

created by Albert Wiczonke, a former SA general who had been imprisoned for resistance activities in 1946. CIC determined that the Greater Germany Group engaged in two types of activities. The first was the infiltration of men into internment camps to organize successful escape plans and to operate an underground railway to Spain. The other tactic was the infiltration of female agents into U.S. Army clubs, tactical units and Military Government, where they established contact with American officers, presumably to extract valuable intelligence or to win the sympathies of these officers.²⁵

Some ex-SS fugitives even managed to elude authorities without leaving Germany. This inner emigration was made possible in much the same way that escape out of Germany was facilitated: through associations of old SS comrades and their families.²⁶ American officials often found however, that there were no nefarious, secret, structured organizations behind this inner emigration, simply personal contacts. These contacts meant that the homes of SS families often served as "safe houses" for fugitive SS men. Numerous examples of this were discovered by OMGUS. A typical case was that of two SS members arrested in Frankfurt in mid-1946. Subsequent investigation revealed that the two men had met little trouble moving from place to place, for they always found a safe haven with SS families. It had been necessary only to prove SS membership to obtain hospitality. Examples of this type of activity were legion throughout the U.S. zone.²⁷

Mutual assistance among SS comrades was apparent from the start of the post-war period. Even reports of SS cells forming within Allied internment camps arose. One report involved claims made by a SS *Oberscharführer* who had erroneously been discharged from a camp and had been re-apprehended later. He reported that the typical fanaticism of the Nazi era still prevailed among SS units in camps at Lembach, Pocking, Ansbach and Regensburg, that all higher offices entrusted to prisoners had been occupied by SS officers, and that anyone who did not fondly remember the "glorious" days of the SS was suppressed immediately. Whether the existence of such SS groupings posed any threat to the occupation is highly doubtful, although this did illustrate that in many cases

the SS kept its sense of cohesion and its devotion to Nazism. In late 1945 it was discovered that a group of about fifty ex-SS personnel were operating in Upper Bavaria and Austria. Whether this group played a role in transporting Nazis *out* of Germany is unclear, although it was certain that the organization was in the business of helping their comrades avoid capture. Among the group's activities was removing SS blood marks, carrying communications between SS men in camps and those who were free, and distributing forged identification papers.²⁸

Any useful analysis of the Nazi-operated underground railways must consider the role of the Western powers, specifically Western intelligence agencies. This is a sordid tale that has been oft-told in the last two decades, in which the complete accounting, in any event, lies outside this study. Suffice it to say that each of the three Western Allies made use of escaping Nazis.²⁹ Because of the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Blockade and the resulting chill in Soviet-Western relations by 1947/8, the eventual dedication of U.S. Military Government to routing out people helping Nazis to escape was doubtful at best. In fact, as mentioned earlier, by 1948 concerns about Nazi subversion and activity were, if the American archives are indicative, basically nil. There is almost no evidence of concern about pro-Nazi activities in the U.S. archival records of 1948-49. Historians such as Bower and Simpson assert that by late 1947 escaping Nazis were of virtually no concern in the face of a perceived Communist threat. If this argument is valid, there are at least two implications in this alleged shift in U.S. policy. For one, these same authors have claimed that after 1947, U.S. intelligence simply looked the other way and even *helped* Nazis get out of Germany. The other assumption implicit in the argument is that the role of German pro-Nazis in operating underground railways was greatly exaggerated, as it was U.S. intelligence operatives who recruited many of them and officials in the Vatican who often got them foreign passports.

Another explanation that could be used to minimize the level of Nazi organization vis-à-vis the underground railways is the disarray within U.S. intelligence. While the headquarters of the zonal CIC unit (the 970th) may have been dedicated to tracking down

wanted Nazis, its effectiveness was inhibited by the decentralized nature of the CIC in Germany. There were, aside from the main CIC detachment, scores of regional and sub-regional offices, which in turn had subordinate field offices in the various towns and villages. Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting point out that the 970th CIC was basically left to its own devices, and its biggest problem was its own people. At the end of the war, many of the best and most experienced CIC agents left the corps and returned to the U.S. These people were replaced by inexperienced and ill-trained young men who were susceptible to corruption and other temptations. Obviously, in these circumstances, escape was made far easier for Nazis in regions where the local CIC left something to be desired, and not much of an organization was necessary, given the occupying power's lack of vigilance³⁰

Considering the mass of evidence of HJ and SS participation in organizing escapes, such arguments minimizing the role of German Nazis are spurious. Even taking into account the chill in East-West relations and the incompetence of several regional CIC branches, Loftus, Aarons and others have repudiated the idea that the 970th CIC simply did not place a priority on capturing escaping Nazis. The scale of Operations Nursery and Selection Board provide stark evidence of the 970th CIC's determination to crush all dangerous pro-Nazi activity, including the underground railway system. In fact, Aarons and Loftus have asserted that although CIC units in Italy and Austria had stopped hunting Nazis by 1947, and in fact had stepped up the recruitment of Nazis as anti-communist "freedom fighters", such was not the case in Germany. In Germany, some CIC units kept lists of war criminals and devoted resources to looking for them until the U.S. pulled out of western Germany. The 970th CIC detachment still contained many professional intelligence agents who had remained after the war (unlike the naive young anti-Communist recruits in Italy, Austria, and other CIC units in the U.S. zone), and who were anti-Nazi as well as anti-communist. Aarons and Loftus believe that even the 970th CIC's most devoted and brilliant anti-Communist experts absolutely forbade the practise of hiring Nazis as spies, and that the 970th "was one of the few intelligence services that

did a competent, dedicated, job of Nazi hunting." Thus, the most accurate assessment of the underground railways is as follows: once they had escaped Germany, Nazi fugitives could find aid from any number of sources (Hudal and the Vatican, Western intelligence agencies, sympathetic nations); however to get out of Germany itself, the aid of several dedicated, organized and efficient pro-Nazi groups was vital and was freely given. In some areas, where the CIC was substandard, escape was presumably easier.³¹

Nazi participation in the underground railways was considerable. The level of organization and the numbers involved - up to a thousand in the HJ conspiracy - must give pause to anybody who would claim that German Nazism came to a complete halt in 1945. In each of the cases discussed in this chapter, the perpetrators were not simply ragtag groups of Nazi sympathizers, but were usually well-trained, highly disciplined individuals. In several cases it was clear that the relatively benign objective of simple escape was not the ultimate goal. The examples of the *Deutsche Revolution* and other groups have demonstrated that the preservation and nurture of a future German ruling class was the goal of many activists manning the underground railways. We have seen that there was considerable pro-Nazi underground resistance to the U.S. occupation in Germany, whether through direct attacks, subtle plots to set up a new Nazi state, or organizing escape routes for accused war criminals. As the next chapter will illustrate however, there were old Nazis who also took action in a legitimate arena: the political realm.

NOTES

1. Simpson, Blowback, pp. 176-177.
2. John Dornberg, Schizophrenic Germany. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp 52-61: T.H. Tetens, The New Germany and the Old Nazis. (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 111-112. Tetens briefly mentions the underground activities of some ex-SS and *Wehrmacht* veterans (the *Bruderschaft*), but does not describe the operation of underground railways among them.
3. Mark Aarons and John Loftus. Ratlines: How the Vatican's Nazi Networks Betrayed Western Intelligence to the Soviets. (London: Heinemann, 1991), pp 25-26.
4. Ibid., p. 27.
5. Ibid., p. 28.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 47.
8. In fact, it was not until Vatican II that the Church declared that Jews were not collectively and permanently responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.
9. Simpson, Blowback.. p. 176.
10. Aarons and Loftus. Ratlines.. p. 235.
11. Simpson, Blowback. p. 176.
12. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, pp. 239-40: USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 38 April 4, 1946. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59. NA.
13. The relationship between Nazism and German business has been a much debated topic. I agree with Peter Stachura's assessment, that "in 1932/3 the German elites backed Hitler in order to preserve and strengthen their own anachronistic privileges and power behind a smokescreen of chauvinism and spurious appeals to national honour" Stachura. The Nazi Machtergreifung , p. 23.

14. Wellington Long, The New Nazis of Germany. (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1968), p. 45.; Gerhard Rempel, Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 44, 242-51; Tauber, pp. 239-40.

15. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 38, April 4, 1946. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-47. 740.00119 Control (Germany), NA.

16. By the end of the war, however, this relationship was more coercive, with the SS in many cases forcing boys in the *HJ* literally at gunpoint. Rempel, Hitler's Children, pp. 241, 258.

17. Rempel, Hitler's Children, pp. 243-8, 10-13.

18. Infield, Secrets of the SS, p. 196.

19. On April 22, 1945, Brigadier-General Josef Spacil, acting on the orders of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, led a party of SS troopers in the robbery of the Reichsbank headquarters in Berlin. Approximately 23 million gold marks worth of jewels, securities and foreign exchange assets were seized. A large sum was reportedly given to Skorzeny, none of which was ever found. Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, Nazi Gold: The Story of the World's Greatest Robbery and its Aftermath. (London: Granada, 1984), pp. 31-32.

20. This is not to say that Hudal and other Vatican officials did not use the *Deutsche Revolution*/Skorzeny-operated escape routes. Indeed, Tauber has perhaps best described these Vatican officials as the "way stations" of the underground railways. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 1109.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

22. USFET "EUCOM Intelligence Summary" No. 2 February 27, 1947 in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), NA.

23. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 1108.

24. USFET "EUCOM Intelligence Summary" No. 4 March 27, 1947; No. 9 June 5, 1947, in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), NA.

25. *Ibid.*

26. "Inner emigration", like "underground railway", is a term with a particular history. Ironically, it was originally coined to describe the withdrawal of non- and anti-Nazi

nationalist conservatives and right-wing revolutionaries from the German political scene after their defeat by Hitler and the Nazis. As Tauber states, these reactionary conservatives stayed in Germany, in the hopes that Hitler would abandon revolution and adopt a more conservative approach. With regard to post-war Nazism, "inner emigration" simply meant a retreat from political life and pro-Nazi activism, either permanently or until such time that Nazism reemerged as a popular force. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika. pp. 17-18.

27. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 42 May 2, 1946. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany). NA.

28. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 22 December 13, 1945, No. 42, May 2, 1946. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), NA.

29. The examples of this are numerous: in Rome, for instance, a joint American-British Intelligence Unit (SCI-Z) recruited Nazis such as SS intelligence chief Walter Rauff (Aarons and Loftus, p. 225.) The French recruited many German POWs to serve in the Foreign Legion, and according to James Diehl, "it was rumoured that nearly 60% of the French Foreign Legion was German, many who were former SS, as evidenced by the names on the graves at Diem Bien Phu." in James Diehl, The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1993), p. 69.

30. Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting. America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter-Intelligence Corps. (London: Grafton Books, 1989). pp. 273-283; Frank A. Ninovich, Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question Since 1945, (New York: Twayne, 1995). p. 29.

31. Aarons and Loftus. Ratlines. pp. 241-242.

Chapter 6: By Legitimate Means: Politics and Nazism

There were avenues other than secretive underground networks through which unreformed Nazis could attempt to realize their goals. Right from its inception, the American Military Government - and for that matter the British Military Government - sought to restore a democratic structure to German political culture. The obvious goal was to leave Germany a fully democratized and heterogenous society by the time the occupation ended. Inevitably, this meant the creation and operating of various political parties with a number of differing views. Although the Nazi Party was expressly and strictly outlawed, room for Nazi sympathizers to manoeuvre still existed, as many formed and joined ostensibly democratic nationalist far-right parties. Although these parties outwardly sang the praises of political democracy and disavowed any sympathy for Hitler and the Nazi regime (they had to if they were to avoid being crushed as subversive and illegal organizations), they were for all intents and purposes pro-Nazi parties.

Once again, the "nationalist or Nazi?" issue arises. Throughout this thesis I have laid out certain criteria which I believe can be used to distinguish true Nazis from conservative nationalists.¹ In addition, Abraham Ashkenasi has conducted a broad analysis of German nationalism in the 20th century. Ashkenasi tackles the question quite effectively. He identifies two distinct categories of German nationalists active in political movements in late 1940s western Germany. The first group were old-fashioned conservative nationalists. Out of this group arose parties consisting of many pre-Nazi German political figures, often coming from the right wings of the DNVP (the pre-1933 conservative German party) and the DVP (the pre-1918 national liberal party). These traditionalist Wilhelmine/Weimar conservatives joined forces with supporters of the conservative "revolutionaries" who had broken with the National Socialists in the late 1920s and early 30s. The other major group of politically organized right-wing nationalists in the mid-to-late 1940s - and the focus of our attention - were the old Nazis. Ashkenasi also divides the pro-Nazi political movements into two general subgroups: those completely unreformed Nazis who sought nothing less than a rebirth of a Hitlerite

regime; and those Nazis willing to adapt National Socialism so as to successfully work within the democratic political framework of post-war Germany. This second subgroup was, according to Ashkenasi, more pragmatic than the first, and were not seeking power so much as they were seeking the rehabilitation of the Nazi regime.²

It is important to understand what type of people gravitated to these pro-Nazi political movements. Obviously, no well-known or high-ranking members of the 1933-45 Nazi Party could openly take part in any political movement in the first few years after the war. By and large, the pro-Nazi parties were composed of mid-to lower-ranking Nazis:

the small fry who were caught up in denazification after the war: officers in the Hitler Youth; middle functionaries; military commanders who were not able because of denazification or because of a personality structure which made success in the post-war environment difficult to achieve.³

In addition, these new political movements obviously hoped to build upon this base by attracting others who had no wartime affiliation with either the Nazi Party or the higher levels of the military.

The rise of various pro-Nazi political parties did not follow any uniform pattern. Some immediately displayed their Nazi sympathies, while others evolved more slowly into pro-Nazi movements. This latter trend would become much more common as the 1940s wore on, and as many parties that originated as ostensibly non-Nazi, democratic conservative movements were co-opted by more radical, activist far-right forces. As we shall discover, no one party had a monopoly on attracting pro-Nazi political activists, yet a few parties had become, by the time of the Occupation Statute, relatively significant on the right of the west German political spectrum.

Although the Nazi Party was immediately outlawed by the U.S. Military Government, this did not mean the end of Nazi political activity. From the beginning, Nazi supporters hoping to form new political parties -expressing basically Nazi ideology

without the National Socialist name -had two options. One was to wait out the initial crackdown on Nazism, and then to "go by the book": in effect to join legitimate political parties. This course of action was undesirable for several reasons. For starters, it was obvious that taking the legal route precluded any avowedly pro-Nazi party from forming. There was also the fear that inside such legitimate parties, Nazi sympathies would be diluted beyond recognition, if not completely dissolved. As was stated above, however, this meant that pro-Nazi elements would have slowly to reshape legal right-wing parties to suit their ideological purposes. In essence, this option meant a sacrifice; a recognition that while, over time, the political dialogue both within the particular party and the country could be made more favourable for Nazis and some of their beliefs, the restoration of a truly and completely Nazified party was a pipe dream. This was the route taken by the most successful far-right, pro-Nazi parties. For those unreformed Nazis who had neither patience nor any long-range strategy, this legal option was, no doubt, unacceptable. There was, however, an alternative approach: the creation of underground, illegal pro-Nazi parties with no concern for legalities or licensing. Did such parties exist?

In the first few months of the occupation it was to be expected that no overt or transparently pro-Nazi political organizations would be possible. OMGUS was satisfied that no such political parties existed, as was made clear in an intelligence report in September of 1945:

In the field of political subversion no wholly Nazi-operated or seriously infiltrated organization has been discovered. There has been no evidence that the party intended to reappear in the guise of another ideology under the direction of little known party adherents. The present apparent absence of political planning by not only the Nazi party but also by any similar nationalist-minded groups must be viewed, however, with full realization that such intentions would not be designed for maturity until Allied control had relaxed.⁴

Within weeks of this report some political activity began to come to light, as American counter-intelligence reported "a considerable increase in political activity,"

although no clear pattern was evident.⁵ Various unsubstantiated reports of former Nazis joining the KPD emerged as well, although no secretive, specifically pro-Nazi underground political parties of any significance were ever identified by OMGUS.⁶ There are two possible explanations for this. The first and most obvious reason was the general effectiveness of the U.S. Military Government in squashing any attempts to form such parties. An alternative explanation was that such parties existed, but were undetected or were omitted from intelligence reports out of Allied embarrassment. This possibility is questionable. The intelligence reports on which this study is based were top secret and did not omit important findings such as secret underground pro-Nazi organizations. The existence of the *Deutsche Revolution* network was far more of an embarrassment than any secret pro-Nazi political party could have been. On the other hand, reports like the USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" were disseminated beyond the intelligence community, and were written by men with a vested interest in promoting the idea that the intelligence services were vigilant. As we saw, however, various local CIC offices were not so vigilant. At any rate, the suppression of overtly pro-Nazi political parties in the first years of the American occupation brings two vital points to the fore. As we shall see, OMGUS was probably more dedicated than the British to restricting pro-Nazi political parties. More importantly, the pro-Nazi political parties that eventually emerged in the U.S. zone did not originate as overtly pro-Nazi organizations.

The 1945-49 period presented a pivotal moment in the development of the ultra-right in post-war German politics. The radical pro-Nazi political movements of these years were unique. Before 1949, the pro-Nazi political right concentrated for the most part on forming parties in active competition with the mainstream CDU/CSU and SPD. After the creation of the Federal Republic, however, the CDU/CSU successfully grabbed the center-right of the West German political spectrum, especially with the banning of the pro-Nazi SRP (Socialist Reich Party) in 1952. Accordingly, many activists on the pro-Nazi right sought to gain influence in the mainstream parties and win the ears of mainstream conservatives, as in the case of the "Naumann Conspiracy." Ashkenasi has

described the history of the German far-right during the occupation as having two distinct phases. The first, from 1945-48, saw conservative nationalists as the driving force behind the formation of far-right political parties. The second phase, from 1948-49, saw the National Socialist element begin to make its presence felt.⁷

The myriad of far-right nationalist parties in late 1940s Germany makes a party-by-party study logistically tenuous. Almost all pro-Nazi parties that had any success followed similar patterns of development. A case study that best illustrates the evolution of pro-Nazi politics in the U.S. zone is that of the *Nationaldemokratische Partei* ("National Democratic Party"), or NDP. The NDP began as a non-Nazi, Wilhelmine conservative party, only to evolve eventually into a pro-Nazi party. The NDP, according to Rand C. Lewis, would prove to be "the most resilient of the far-right parties."⁸ It is difficult to argue with this assessment, as the party's direct descendant made successful inroads as recently as the late 1960s.⁹ The NDP provides a revealing look at how politically active and unrepentant Nazis were able to push their agenda (if somewhat covertly) during the American occupation. As would so often prove to be the case in occupied Germany, the more "moderate" and non-Nazi elements of the far-right political parties were challenged and often superseded by the radical pro-Nazi factions.

The NDP was officially formed in the fall of 1945 in Hesse. Its founder was Heinrich Leuchtgens, an arch-conservative in the late 19th century Bismarckian/Wilhelmine vein. Leuchtgens had been a member of the Hessian diet during Weimar, and had served as Deputy Mayor of Friedberg until 1933, when he was removed by the Nazis for speaking out against Nazi radicalism. In 1934, Leuchtgens was sent to the Osthofen concentration camp in Rhineland-Hessen for a month for ignoring Nazi censorship laws. From 1934-45 Leuchtgens withdrew from the political scene, during which time he developed and actually wrote up a detailed constitution for a post-Hitler Reich. When he came to the American authorities in the spring of 1945 with his proposed constitution, Leuchtgens was - not surprisingly - ignored and dismissed as an eccentric old crackpot. Leuchtgens' proposed constitution called for a return to the monarchial Reich.

and as such was most revealing of Leuchtgens' political leanings. Leuchtgens, if his constitution was any indication, was no advocate of Western liberal democracy. Although Leuchtgens' constitution guaranteed civil liberties and individual human rights,

Women were not only barred from all public offices but were also disenfranchised. Men, on the other hand each had two votes after the age of forty, three votes after the age of fifty, and four votes after the age of sixty. The entire population was divided according to individual fitness, into nobility and commoners... The state had the obligation to suppress the indolent, incompetent and improvident members of society. The legislature would be a two-chamber Assembly of Estates, consisting of a hereditary upper house and a house of representatives. The Lander were to be made into hereditary dukedoms and the Reich into a hereditary kingdom. Only two parties, one rightist and one leftist were to be allowed.¹⁰

On October 18, 1945, Leuchtgens published his "Program of the National Democratic Party of Germany," in which he stated:

Today we must orient ourselves toward England and the United States of America. They are, for the foreseeable future, the countries which will set the political pace and which are the bearers of constitutional progress, as well as the defenders of the rights of free men. In view of Anglo-Saxon political conditions, we call for the formation of a large bourgeois-unity party, the vanguard for the maintenance of private property.¹¹

In addition, the document contained an impassioned rebuff of Nazism, as well as a modified version of Leuchtgens' constitution that excluded the monarchist aspects of the original. Was Leuchtgens simply hiding his anti-democratic, monarchist tendencies in order to tell the Americans what they wanted to hear? This is uncertain, although it is clear that Leuchtgens was no Nazi. Despite these efforts, OMGUS would not grant the NDP a Land-wide license. The NDP was relegated to running in local and district elections as separate organizations. For two to three years the NDP languished, as conservative Germans flooded to the CDU and other mainstream parties.¹²

By late 1947 and early 1948 the NDP began to take on a more radical and aggressive tone. This was due in part to the CDU's successful positioning of itself as *the* moderate conservative party of Germany. More importantly, however, it was also due to the appearance of more intractable Nazis within the party. The local chapters began to assume a more authoritarian tone, calling for the destruction of labour unions and the eradication of Marxism. Much to the chagrin of Leuchtgens, both his grip on the party and his view of what the NDP should represent were being torn away. As Tauber and others have maintained, the former Nazis that had been denazified, and thus forced out of jobs and public office, proved to be a tantalizing target for right-wing nationalist conservative parties hoping to broaden their bases. The NDP joined this competition, as its publications evoked sympathy for the "oppressed" Nazis and its political rallies embraced the aesthetics of the old Nazi rallies of the 1920s and 30s.¹³ With Hessian city and district elections scheduled for April 25, 1948, the NDP began its transformation "from a conservative-nationalist, monarchist party into a radical-nationalist party of incorrigible Nazis."¹⁴

Once again, Wiesbaden proved to be a centre of Nazi activity and support, as an ex-*Waffen-SS* officer, Carl Heinz, gained the leadership of Wiesbaden's NDP organization. Amazingly, Heinz was openly boastful of his role in the *Waffen-SS*, and took in many old Nazis as party members.¹⁵ Among these members was a former HJ leader, Karl-Heinz Priester, who had avoided the denazification process and had helped Heinz develop a Nazi-style propaganda campaign. The Wiesbaden NDP even brawled in the streets with Communists, mimicking the SA brownshirts of the late 1920s and early 30s. The election results in Hesse rewarded the strategy of this most pro-Nazi faction of the NDP. The NDP received more than 10% of the vote in almost every district and city in which it had competed. Most significantly, in Wiesbaden, the home of the obviously pro-Nazi Heinz-Priester branch of the NDP, the party took an impressive 24.4% of the vote, running third. Shockingly (to OMGUS), the approximately 26,000 votes for the Wiesbaden NDP were only 3,000 shy of the votes won by the first-place SPD. Fifteen of the twenty

NDP candidates in Wiesbaden were elected to the city council, winning a quarter of the seats. The argument might be made that the electoral success of the NDP in the Hessian elections of 1948 was a reflection not of Nazi sympathies, but of traditional Wilhelmine nationalism. Such an assessment is contradicted by the proportionally greater success of the Wiesbaden NDP. Though the Leuchtgens wing of the NDP was avowedly conservative and nationalist, the pro-Nazi Wiesbaden NDP had by far the greater success. With its Nazi symbolism and tactics, the Wiesbaden NDP had left little doubt about where it stood. Most revealingly, Tauber reported that the best NDP results were “in precisely those counties which even in the days of the Empire and the Weimar Republic had given their votes in large numbers to avowedly nationalistic, *anti-semitic* (italics mine) candidates.”¹⁶

The Nazi wing of the NDP had co-opted the political direction of the party. From 1948-49 the party was driven further and further to the right. The activists in the party were by and large of the Heinz-Priester faction. Heinz and Priester called on the party to maintain the “positive achievements” of Hitler’s regime. Inevitably, the party was torn into two distinct factions: Leuchtgens’ conservative nationalists and Heinz’s pro-Nazi radicals. The shift of the party to the pro-Nazi right became even more evident after Leuchtgens summarily expelled Heinz from the party in August 1948. One might have thought that this would have heralded a return to the party’s original ideological bent. A mutually acceptable candidate, Karl Schafer of Asfeld, was elected as executive Land chairman for Hesse. Schafer put to rest any thought that the NDP would retreat from its appeals to Nazi ideals and sympathies. From his election onwards, Schafer pandered to the Nazi wing of the NDP. He called on the party “to do everything in our power to return the old, honest public officials (those removed by denazification) to their former jobs,” and he demanded the end of denazification and the re-establishment of the old Reich with the boundaries of 1914. The party newspaper denounced all other parties as Marxist and Communist, and opposed the preliminary draft of the Basic Law for West Germany. In the spring 1949 county by-elections in Asfeld, the NDP gained 14% on its

1948 results. The party took 19.5% of the votes in the district and 31.5% in the city of Asfeld, becoming the second largest party in the district - all without a Land license.¹⁷

By the time of the inaugural West German elections of 1949, the NDP had split. Leuchtgens chose to align his faction with the right-liberal FDP (Free Democratic Party), while the National Socialist faction seceded from the party but kept the party name. Aside from Leuchtgens himself, no NDP candidate won election to the Bundestag in 1949. The split in the party was representative of the general disunity of the pro-Nazi political right in post-war Germany. Still, the fact remains that the Nazi element in German politics and society was still relevant. The pro-Nazi activists had grabbed the NDP by the throat and had forced their agenda onto the entire party, making even Leuchtgens' post-1949 incarnation of the NDP much more radical than the 1945 version of the party. The NDP-FDP coalition attempted to lure unreformed Nazis and spoke openly of a German Reich operating under the nationalist colours and symbols.¹⁸

The NDP was by no means unique in its transformation from a non-Nazi, monarchist conservative party to a pro-Nazi, radically nationalist, anti-semitic party that exuded, in Tauber's words, "almost undisguised Hitlerism."¹⁹ As I have suggested, this transformation did not come about casually. Two vital factors contributed to this metamorphosis. The most direct cause was the effort and tireless activity of dedicated Nazis and their sympathizers. The other underlying factor was the enduring strength of Nazi ideology within certain regions (e.g. Hesse and Bavaria) and amongst certain segments of post-war German society. If this sentiment had not been present, the variety of far-right parties would not have existed in occupied Germany. Conservative parties and leaders such as Leuchtgens would not have moved to the far-right if this "market" of pro-Nazi voters had not existed. Without a doubt, pro-Nazi political activism was alive and well in the American Zone of Germany.

With the considerable level of Nazi activism in the U.S. Zone, it would be easy to get the impression that American officials were lax, or that certain elements in the U.S. Military Government tacitly allowed the resurgence of the pro-Nazi right. It is clear that

differing CIC agendas and levels of competency in the various regions and Lands of the American Zone meant that in some cases, this was probably true. On this point, however, some clarification is needed. The British were faced with many similar bureaucratic difficulties, and seemed to fare no better than the U.S. in suppressing pro-Nazi political parties. In fact, as we shall see, the post-occupation strength of pro-Nazi parties in the former British zone indicated that the U.S. may actually have done a better job than the British in inhibiting such parties. During the occupation, American officials were indeed deeply concerned about pro-Nazi political parties in the British zone. Of special concern was a party that came to prominence in 1946, the *Niedersächsische Landespartei* ("State Party of Lower Saxony"), or NLP, a group which interested U.S. authorities because it also operated in the American enclave of Bremen.

The NLP was founded in the Hanover area and was recognized by the British Military Government in early 1946. On May 29, 1946, branches in Bremen and Bremerhaven were authorized.²⁰ Like the NDP at its inception, the NLP was a non-Nazi, conservative-monarchist party. The original focus of the NLP was strictly regional, with appeals to Lower-Saxon particularism, a call for the dissolution of Prussia and a desire for a federal Germany closely aligned to the British Commonwealth.²¹ This was likely intended to play well on the British, by favouring the restoration of the Hanoverian (Windsor) dynasty in its traditional lands. Almost immediately, however, the NLP built its membership by including former Nazis. In fact, a Political Intelligence Summary for March 1946 reported that "...the NLP had difficulty with MG because its leaders had a troublesome way of being ex-NSDAP members."²² The language of NLP spokespeople, like that of August 3, 1946 sounded as if it could have come from the mouth of Adolf Hitler:

The NLP recognizes that either the national boundaries are erased or we have to wage war in order to gain colonies...the struggle for existence would be bloody, one way or the other. The brutality and savageness of the struggle behind us (WW II) were caused by Germany's needs and the

situation concerning her raw materials.²³

In a party speech that was supposed to be delivered on Radio Bremen on September 10, 1946, the NLP stated that "we demand that our democracy be bound to the laws of nature and follow the principle of selection rather than bring together the weak, or even the incapable, and protect them."²⁴ The speech was rejected by Radio Bremen and the party was forced to keep a low profile for a while.

In the spring of 1947, several questionable speeches submitted to Radio Bremen by the NLP drew attention to the party. So filled were the speeches with nationalist, racist and anti-democratic ideas that they had to be rejected for broadcasting. OMGUS' concern escalated when American officials surmised that the NLP was, in practical terms, the strongest political party in the rural areas of Land Bremen. OMGUS' conclusions were as follows:

The NLP may not be a Nazi party. However, it must be described as an anti-democratic, nationalist (in spite of the appeal to Lower-Saxony particularism), racist and potentially militaristic group. It represents, in other words, practically all those forces which it is MG's announced intention and stated policy to combat.²⁵

The NLP soon changed its name to the *Deutsche Partei* ("German Party") or DP. Soon the doors were open to Reich nationalists and the party adopted the black-white-red of the former Reich.²⁶

U.S. officials were usually surprised and dismayed at the level of support won by some of the pro-Nazi parties. Of course appeals to racist nationalism and anti-semitism had always been effective in some regions of occupied Germany, at least since the 1800s. Areas such as Bavaria and Hesse had a history of supporting anti-semitic and radical, far-right movements.²⁷ As such, there was automatically a fair base of support for far-right Nazi parties, and electoral success should have been expected.²⁸

Given this natural base of support, one might well wonder why the pro-Nazi

parties did not in fact have *greater* electoral successes than they did. The answer becomes obvious when one simply glances at the number of far-right, pro-Nazi parties in the U.S. zone alone by 1948-9. The veritable alphabet soup of parties, along with the frequent schisms and secessions within these parties illustrated one of the overriding obstacles for the far-right. Activists trying to create a broader base of support - and eventually an electoral mandate to govern - could never unite the far-right. The very nature of the leadership within these Nazi-style parties precluded co-operation. Proposed inter-party mergers were almost always unsuccessful because the autocratic centralized nature of rightist party leadership meant that leaders would not defer to the chiefs of other parties, or even to the bosses of branches of their own parties.²⁹ The predictable effect was a splintering of the far-right vote and the eventual marginalization of pro-Nazi political parties in the decades to follow.

Significantly, however, Hitler's NSDAP emerged from a similar glut of competing far-right parties in the late 1920s. How then, did post-war pro-Nazi political strategy compare with Hitler's "parliamentary strategy" of 1923-33, after he had given up on paramilitary politics? It is interesting to note the similarities and differences in the climate of the Germany of 1923-33 and U.S.-occupied Germany. Upon first glance, both Hitler and the post-war Nazis shared similar goals and circumstances. For both, the use of force was not a viable option. Hitler's Beer Hall *Putsch* of 1923 had been crushed. As for the politically active, occupation-era Nazis, the use of force seemed ridiculous in the face of overwhelmingly superior Allied might. Both Hitler and the post-war Nazis had to direct their efforts to long-term goals. The Germany of 1923 and 1945-49 bore some similarities. Both were recently defeated nations in a state of chaos, and both faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In 1923, Germany faced the spectre of hyperinflation and economic ruin, while in 1945, the nation faced the challenge of rebuilding, both physically and morally. Perhaps post-war, politically active Nazis could have used Hitler's successful parliamentary strategy as a model. Like the 1923 Nazi Party, the most prominent occupation-era, pro-Nazi parties were regional, looking for a national audience.

As a result, by 1929-30, Hitler's NSDAP pulled back from its outward emphasis on anti-semitism, as did post-war Nazi sympathizers.³⁰

The Germany of 1923-33 and that of 1945-55 had, however, many differences - differences that worked against the success of a Hitlerian "parliamentary strategy" for the pro-Nazis of the occupation and beyond. Ian Kershaw has attributed Hitler's parliamentary success to the NSDAP's claim as *the* strongest opponent of Marxism and the strongest advocate of German renewal.³¹ By 1949, and especially by the mid 1950s, pro-Nazi politicians were undercut on both counts. No one could claim to be more anti-communist than Adenauer and the Federal Republic's U.S. allies. More significantly, with the economic miracle of the 1950s, "national renewal" had been achieved, as financial prosperity came to West Germany. The FRG of the early 1950s onward was an economically powerful, much-valued partner of the most powerful nation on earth, and was well on its way to becoming the dominant economic power in central and western Europe. There was no issue that lent a mass appeal to revived Nazism. Obviously, the legal restraints on post-war Nazis were a crucial difference from 1923 as well. Finally, perhaps the greatest barrier to a Nazi political renewal was recent German history. Hitler too had outwardly tolerated the parliamentary system in the late 1920s and early '30s, and the NSDAP claimed to be all things to all people: the friend of workers, business, the military and women. The NSDAP was able to fool more Germans into voting for it than for any other party, in the hopes that strong leadership would cure Germany's ills. From 1945 onward, there should have been no such illusions. Nazis would never again be able to convince the general German public. World War Two and the Holocaust had seen to that. Clearly, a Hitlerian parliamentary strategy would prove to be much more difficult for occupation-era Nazi activists, as circumstances, laws and recent history had left them handcuffed in ways that Hitler was not.³²

If Nazi political activists were unable to unify the far right in occupied Germany, they were, to a degree, able to impose their agenda. As we have seen, almost all of the pro-Nazi parties that developed during the occupation did not begin as pro-Nazi

movements. The case studies of the NDP and the NLP illustrate this. One line of argument suggests that these parties originally hid their Nazi sentiments under a veil of pro-democratic pretensions and/or traditional German conservatism, a demeanour maintained until the pressure from occupation authorities had relented. This ignores the definitive, pro-active role that old Nazis and their supporters had in reshaping those parties both structurally and ideologically. The Nazi elements either took over these parties or they pushed the party programs to the right, even among the conservative wings that broke off from the Nazi radicals.

The final aspect of this discussion focuses on the ultimate legacy of the pro-Nazi political activists of 1945-49. Whether they achieved their goal depends on one's point of view. Obviously, on the most basic and literal level - that of eventually reestablishing a Nazi-style Reich - the pro-Nazis failed completely. No far right-dominated party or coalition ever held power in the FRG. On a more subtle level however, the pro-Nazi political activists of 1945-9 did have some impact in shaping the dialogue of the German right for the next twenty years or so. Many militants on the far right, with no other options, eventually gave their support to the CDU/CSU (or, to a lesser extent, the FDP) in the 1950s. If they were to have any impact on FRG policy, this was the only way, for as we have seen, it would be nearly impossible to form a far-right governing majority. Some far-right, possibly pro-Nazi members of the occupation-era parties rose to prominence within Adenauer's governments in the 1950s. Perhaps the best example of this trend was Hans Christophe Seebohn of the DP, who became the FRG's minister of transportation under Adenauer. Seebohn became a spokesman for revisionist, pro-Nazi nationalist politicians. Critics such as Tauber and Ashkenasi have indeed postulated that in the early years of post-war Germany it was ultra-right and even pro-Nazi activists who shaped the agenda of the political right. Ashkenasi in particular has claimed that, contrary to popular belief, it was conservative nationalists of the pre-Hitler era (ie, those who had opposed Hitler) who had the *least* impact on the post-war German right. This contention may stretch the argument a bit too far, especially when one takes into account the success

of Adenauer, who was an anti-Hitler conservative. Jeffrey Herf, in fact, takes the opposing viewpoint. He sees post-war Germany as a case of "multiple restorations" of pre-1933 political traditions, where anti-Nazism found expression on the right, as well as the center-left. Herf believes that post-war Germany (East and West) saw a return to the anti-and non-Nazi political traditions, including communism, social democracy, liberalism and moderate conservatism. Herf claims that in fact it was Adenauer who had the *greatest* impact on the political traditions of the center-right: Adenauer - in Herf's opinion - focused less on the traditional state dominance over individual rights than on a conservatism inspired by natural rights doctrine and based on "basic Christian values."³³

Ultimately, the lack of unity on the pro-Nazi right, the legal obstacles (ie, the banning of outwardly Nazi parties), weariness of Nazism and Nazi militarism among the majority of the German public, and the eventual economic prosperity of the FRG made real success a virtual impossibility for pro-Nazi political activists and parties. Still, in the final analysis, such activists did succeed on a minor level by moving in and dominating the ultra-right wing parties during the occupation and thus exerting a degree of influence on the West German political right in the 1950s and 60s.

NOTES

1. Most notably in Chapters 1 and 3.
2. Ashkenasi, Modern German Nationalism, pp. 91-92.
3. Ibid.
4. OMGUS "Monthly Report of the Military Governor for August" No. 2 September 20, 1945; in State Dept. Decimal Files. 1945-49. 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
5. USFET "Weekly Intelligence Summary" No. 13. October 11, 1945. in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.
6. Ibid. With the possible exception, of course, of the political functionaries of the *Deutsche Revolution* network.
7. Ashkenasi, p. 92; Lewis, A Nazi Legacy, p. 40: The Naumann conspiracy was, in essence, an attempt by several old Nazis, under the leadership of Dr. Werner Naumann, to form a secretive leadership cadre. The strategy was that this organization would eventually infiltrate the remaining far-right parties - and even, to a degree, the CDU - in the Bundestag. The goal was to eventually form a powerful and united party of far-right ultra-nationalists. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, pp. 136-146.
8. Lewis, A Nazi Legacy, p. 46.
9. A faction of the NDP eventually emerged in the 1960s as part of the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland* ("National Democratic Party of Germany") or NPD. The NPD was extremely potent in communal and state elections in 1966, 67 and 68, as it was voted into the State Parliaments of Hesse, Bavaria, Rhineland Palatinate, Lower Saxony and Bremen: (Ashkenasi, p.111). In fact, the rise of the "scaremongering" historians in the late 1960s and early 70s (such as Wellington Long and Lord Russell of Liverpool) has been attributed by Geoffrey Roberts to these electoral successes. (Roberts, Parliamentary Affairs, p. 330.)
10. Heinrich Leuchtgens, "*Der Entwurf einer Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches*" (Draft Constitution), Articles 9,10, Article 12, Section 2; Articles 25, 58, 81,88; cited by Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, pp. 71-72.
11. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 72.

12. Ibid., p. 73.

13. This included the flying of the nationalist (and Nazi) colours of red, black and white at party rallies and campaign stops, all the while ignoring the republican colours of black-red-gold. As reported by Colonel James R. Newman, director of OMGUS for Land Hesse, in *Nordwestdeutsche Rundschau* (Wilhelmshaven), April 29, 1948; cited in Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, pp. 74, 1017.

14. Ibid., p. 76.

15. In fact, a subsequent investigation of the Wiesbaden NDP by the Land Military Government found that of the twenty NDP candidates in Wiesbaden (for the April 25, 1948 elections), ten had been Nazi Party members and fourteen had been placed by the denazification courts in the first four categories of offenders. *Die Welt* (Hamburg) May 4, 1948; cited in Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 76.

16. Ibid., pp. 75, 1018.

17. Ibid., p. 78-79.

18. The FDP was another classic example of ex-Nazis and their sympathizers co-opting what had originally been an essentially non-Nazi, even "liberal" party. By 1948-9 many old Nazis had found a home in the FDP. Ibid., p. 891.

19. Ibid., p. 79.

20. OMGUS "Information Control Weekly Review" No. 24, May 17, 1947; in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany), RG 59, NA.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, p. 886; Bracher, The German Dictatorship, p.

469; OMGUS "Information Control Weekly Review" No. 24, May 17, 1947 in State Dept. Decimal Files 1945-49, 740.00119 Control (Germany). RG 59, NA.

27. Both regions were populated with heavily rural areas which had a tradition of anti-semitism. The cult of the *volk* often emphasized that true German culture was not the product of industrial, urban society, but of the land and its people, who were pure. Those who lacked ties to the soil, especially bourgeois Jews, were seen as inferiors without true culture. In this view, rural Germans were untouched by "Jewish capitalism" and thus reflected ancient Germanic mores. This 19th century cult of the *volk* found its way into the art of the day, as Wagner's operas were performed in Bayreuth, thus making inroads into urban Bavaria. In addition, the traditional anti-semitic aspects of Christianity no doubt played a powerful role in shaping the attitudes of generally religious rural Germans. Warren Morris, The Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), pp. 12-15.

28. In the case of Bavaria, a prominent post-war pro-Nazi party called the WAV (*Wirtschaftliche Aufbauvereinigung*) arose. As in the case of the NDP, it originally was conceived as a right-wing conservative party that was ostensibly non-Nazi. Like the NLP/DP in the British zone, the WAV was a regionally particularist party (substituting Bavaria for Lower-Saxony). In Wiesbaden, much of the NDP's post-WW II constituency was, before the Nazi era notoriously anti-semitic, and its support shifted easily, without coercion, to the Nazis by 1934. Tauber, Beyond Eagle and Swastika, pp. 711-727.

29. Lewis, A Nazi Legacy, p. 43.

30. This is not to say that anti-semitism was not the core component of Hitlerian Nazi ideology, merely that this anti-semitism played "no more than a secondary role in the transformation from *volkish* sect to mass party." Ian Kershaw, "Ideology, Propaganda and the Rise of the Nazi Party" in The Nazi Machtergreifung, p. 168.

31. Ibid., pp. 168-169.

32. Richard Bessel, "Violence as Propaganda: the Role of the Stormtroopers in the Rise of National Socialism" in The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919-1933, ed. Thomas Childers, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 131-141; From Weimar to Hitler: Germany 1918-33, ed. E.J. Feuchtwenger, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 226-232.

33. Jeffrey Herf, "Multiple Restorations: German Political Traditions and the Interpretation of Nazism, 1945-1946" in Central European History, 26 (1) 1993, pp. 21-52.

CONCLUSION

Nazism did not die with Adolf Hitler in the spring of 1945. While no Nazi or pro-Nazi movement has ever held the balance of political power in the 51 years of German history since the end of the so-called "thousand year Reich", the early days heard disturbing rumblings, as this thesis has shown. As we have seen, pro-Nazi sentiment, and more importantly, pro-Nazi sympathy did not disappear in 1945, only to reemerge sporadically in the early 1950s and late 1960s. In the first years following the conclusion of World War II, almost every conceivable path of action was taken by the old Nazis (those who had avoided arrest) and their supporters. While many Nazis withdrew and simply faded into the population at large, often changing their names and choosing to ignore or run from their past, others were not apologetic and in fact continued to fight, both against the occupation and for Nazi renewal.

Physical violence and sabotage served as the primary outlet for many young Germans faced by chaos and foreign occupation. Usually, this was not a manifestation of a dangerous Nazi revival, but merely a reflection of the frustrations of violent, bored adolescents. To be sure, many of the young saboteurs regarded themselves as patriots, and not necessarily as Nazis. Some admittedly avowed their support for Hitler and Nazism, yet their devotion to the ideals of Nazism was questionable, if not absent. No doubt some praise of Nazism among violent, direct action groups is better understood as a show of support for a native regime that had ruled their beloved Fatherland, as opposed to any real devotion to Nazism in particular. For many violent youth, even this rationalization probably provides too much of an ideological motive for anti-occupation violence. Many direct-action groups were composed of ex-*Edelweiss Piraten*, and their post-war violence against the occupation often echoed the subversive, anti-authority violence of the original *Piraten*. The subsequent entry of some ex-HJ into formerly anti-HJ *Piraten* gangs, as well as the evolution of these *Piraten* into anti-occupation resistance groups, did not necessarily qualify them as pro-Nazi organizations. The HJ membership was not uniformly pro-Nazi, even if it could be deemed ultra-nationalist. If ultra-

nationalism was one of the leading doctrines of Nazi ideology, it was not *exclusive* to Nazism. Radical nationalists were not automatically Nazis.

Even if some youth-based direct-action groups *were* ideological Nazis, the fact that they had neither a serious plan to revive Nazism nor a deep organizational acumen resulted in their violence amounting to nothing more than ineffective pinpricks against the Military Government. However, the number of German youth in violent, direct-action groups, along with subsequent opinion surveys by OMGUS, does lead to one important conclusion about post-war youth and Nazism: the influence of the Nazi educational system remained relatively strong, as adolescent Germans were found to be more anti-semitic and racist than any other age group in the American Zone. The staying power of Nazi education - and the subsequent failures of occupation-era pedagogy - posed a greater threat to the future of Germany than did direct and aimless violence.

This thesis also demonstrated the relationship between three elements - the level of violent resistance, an ideological commitment to restoring Nazism, and organizational sophistication. While perhaps emotionally satisfying and in some cases even spectacular (as in the *Spruchkammern* bombings), violence was, ultimately, little more than a nuisance to the military government. These lower level activists had no plan and thus formed no substantive threat, although in some cases OMGUS did not immediately realize this fact. On the second level of resistance, we saw organizations whose ideological understanding of Nazism was clearer, although their effectiveness was still limited. Groups such as the *Gotenbund* and the *Gruener Teufel* expressed a more "metaphysical" type of resistance, keeping alive the militaristic spirit and the cult of the *Volk*. The U-7 group in Bavaria expressed a more tangible strategy of bureaucratic renazification. Once again, however, the scope and danger of such organizations was limited and narrow. The *Gotenbund* and *Gruener Teufel* were merely expressions of an intangible, spiritual rebellion against both the occupation and denazification; they were almost tantamount to social protest movements. The U-7's devotion to any sort of full-scale Nazi revival was dubious at best. Self-interest and concern with the economic

stability of their fellow Nazi-era civil servants were the apparent motivations of this strictly regional organization. Although the expressed goals of U-7 (the renazification of the civil service) may have been realized to a degree in West Germany by the early 1950s, their role was not significant, and their activities cannot be credited with inspiring a national trend of renazification. Their successes were local and limited. It may be that similar groups functioned in other areas, but there is no evidence to prove this.

I also found that the *Deutsche Revolution* was easily the most significant pro-Nazi resistance organization, and its existence provides the best proof that Nazism would not go off quietly into the night. Here was an underground organization that attempted to form a sort of shadow government. The *Deutsche Revolution* network shared many of the characteristics of a classic World War Two resistance group (as laid out by Jorgen Haestrop). The one exception was that one of the keys to success for wartime resistance organizations was support from abroad, both moral and material (in the form of radio broadcasts and smuggled supplies).¹ As far as I can ascertain, this was something that the *Deutsche Revolution* did not have. There might have been tacit sympathy from Spain and certain governments in Latin America, but it is not likely that they even knew about the existence of the *Deutsche Revolution*, and certainly no aid was forthcoming. The *Deutsche Revolution* network had a definitive goal, which was the establishment of a new Nazi Germany with network leaders at the helm, and they had a plan, which entailed the formation of a leadership cadre and organization ready to run the new Reich. They had an intelligence organization, a military wing and political organizations. They took part in all manner of activities. Of all the occupation-era manifestations of pro-Nazi activity, the *Deutsche Revolution* was the most significant. Without the massive British-American sweep of Operation Selection Board, the *Deutsche Revolution* might have become a powerful threat to the democratic future of West Germany. This is one of those intriguing “what ifs” of history.

The *Deutsche Revolution* was one of the organizations that helped old Nazis escape from Germany. Considered alongside the HJ conspiracy and the Skorzeny

conspiracy, we saw the ideological nature of the underground railways for German Nazis. Although the people who were actually escaping may have simply been concerned with self-preservation and avoiding incarceration, many of those German organizations that helped foster this escape were often more audacious in their goals. Obviously SS comradery was an important factor, but many of the Germans operating the underground railways saw it as their duty to protect and preserve some of the future elite of a renazified German state. Escape, in this context, was not a passive activity. As a result, we can safely state that the actions of secret Nazi organizations that helped Nazis flee *were* acts of resistance against the occupation. That said, we must take care not to overemphasize the role of secret Nazi groups in fostering this escape. CIC breakdowns in various areas made escape that much easier, and obviously, Western intelligence agencies and the Vatican played major roles in getting some Nazis to freedom.

In the end, we must return to the issue of the historical significance of pro-Nazi activity (underground and otherwise) during the occupation. On the most basic level, as we have seen, groups like the *Deutsche Revolution* were important because without an Allied crackdown, the threat they posed may have become reality. At a deeper level, however, these organizations hold a certain importance because of the peculiar history of Germany in this century. After World War Two, it was to be expected that the world would always be watching Germany for signs of a Nazi renewal. After all, Nazism was not defeated by German rejection: it was removed by external force through war. It was only at the end of the war that German citizens denigrated the Nazis. Indeed, Ashkenasi has claimed that in the year or so after the end of the war, National Socialism was not overwhelmingly perceived by Germans to be a ruinous mistake. He cites surveys of Germans in the American and British zones between November 1945 and December 1946 in which "an average of 47% felt that National Socialism was a good idea badly carried out."² Perhaps with leaders other than Hitler, Nazism would not be rejected by a majority of Germans, or so this line of thinking suggested. One wonders if the problem that Germans had with Nazism was the system of thought itself or the fact that it had

prompted a defeat of monumental proportions. Was Hitler derided and posthumously rejected by the German people because his government committed mass atrocities and his policies were evil, or was he discredited because he and his cronies had lost the war? It is difficult to determine the source of the new found German aversion to Nazism during the occupation; whether this represented a rejection of barbarism or a rejection of failure. If the answer is the latter, then Nazi activity during the occupation becomes that much more significant. If the flaw of Nazism was that it led Germany to defeat, then it is possible that a new "purified" Nazism could have eventually won acceptance in a Germany free of enemy occupation. Thanks to Selection Board, we will never know the answer to this question.

At the outset I also posed the question of what the relative lack of success of the pro-Nazi, radical right in the last 50 years has meant when pro-Nazi activity during the occupation is assessed. Indeed, the long-term failure of the pro-Nazi right was not certain during the first years of the new West German state. Until the banning of the SRP in 1952, its support base was growing. There was a concern that the Nazi movement would be whitewashed, with the blame for its atrocities placed solely on Hitler and no one else. Lobbying groups for old SS and *Waffen-SS* veterans began to appear in the early 1950s, and even Adenauer spoke with pride of the greatness of the German military during World War Two. In a December 3, 1952 speech in the Bundestag, Adenauer claimed that "all the armed services of our people fought honourably and the good reputation and great accomplishment of the German soldiers live in our land."³ Herf has written that the question of the Holocaust was one that the first West German leaders did not deal with, especially Adenauer, who simply seemed to ignore any reference to it.⁴ In 1952, the American High Commission conducted surveys (of 1200 people) that revealed that 44% of Germans questioned thought that "there was more good than bad" in Nazism, and only 34% "thought Nazism bad, without qualification."⁵ In the light of these early 1950s "growing pains" in the FRG, the pro-Nazi movements of 1945-49 seemed, in retrospect, to constitute a serious threat to the future of German democracy.

It would be easy to get the impression that West Germany was under the constant threat of Nazi influence and subversion. This was true to a degree during the occupation and into the first years of the republic. After the early 1950s however, this was increasingly untrue. In fact, the "economic miracle" seemed to finish off the collapse of Nazism begun by defeat in World War Two. After prosperity came to West Germany, Nazi activists never again posed any serious threats to the democratic institutions of the republic. There were, of course, brief periods of small-scale, pro-Nazi political revival (most notably the electoral successes of the NPD in regional and district elections in the late 1960s), but by and large, the Nazi threat was dead. With the economic prosperity and the nuclear threat of the 1950s and 1960s there arose a new generation of Germans with no memories of Nazism, save the rubble of 1940s Germany. By the end of the 1950s the new Federal Republic of Germany had emerged. It was a nation where the Cold War had left most people adverse to militarism in all its forms: a nation where the most powerful political protest movements were *not* associated with Nazism but were dominated by the "left-wing" (such as the anti-nuclear peace movements of the 1960s and 1980s and the "green" movement of the 1980s).

We are over a half century removed from the demise of the Third Reich. Most of the old Nazis are dead or dying of old age. I would ultimately assess the pro-Nazi movements and activities of 1945-49 in the U.S. Zone as follows: I would suggest that the strength and pervasiveness of these movements throughout the occupation and into the initial years of the Federal Republic cannot be dismissed as that of a lunatic fringe with no hope for success. Only Allied vigilance kept movements such as the *Deutsche Revolution* in check, without which no one can predict how powerful this network would have become. I submit that organized Nazism as a significant force in Germany did not die in 1945. The ideological dedication, organization and fanaticism of many of the occupation-era Nazis *was* a tangible threat to the future of German democracy, but in the end they were thwarted by three factors: the overwhelming force and general vigilance of the occupying powers, the association of Nazism with German defeat, and perhaps most

importantly, the subsequent prosperity of the FRG in the nuclear age, which undermined any mass appeal to revolutionary change and militarism.

NOTES

1. Haestrop, European Resistance Movements. p. 498.
2. Ashkenasi, Modern German Nationalism. p. 60.
3. Large, "Reckoning with the Past". p. 90.
4. Herf, "Multiple Restorations". p. 42-3.
5. Terence Prittie, Konrad Adenauer: 1876-1967. (Chicago: Cowles Book Co, 1971), p. 203.

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Title of Thesis:

The Mouse that Roared? Pro-Nazi Resistance in U.S.-Occupied Germany, 1945-49: A View from the American Archives

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December 3, 1996