

# MICROCOSM: Portrait of a European City

by Norman Davies (pp. 326-379)

## Breslau before and during the Second World War 1918-45

The politics of interwar Germany passed through three distinct phases. In 1918-20, anarchy spread far and wide in the wake of the collapse of the German Empire. Between 1919 and 1933, the Weimar Republic re-established stability, then lost it. And from 1933 onwards, Hitler's 'Third Reich' took an ever firmer hold. Events in Breslau, as in all German cities, reflected each of the phases in turn.

The German Empire collapsed on 9 November 1918. As the Kaiser departed into exile in the Netherlands, the headless state descended into chaos. Across Europe, numerous parties fought over the remains of four defunct empires. As Churchill wrote, the end of the 'war of the giants' ushered in a 'war of the pygmies'. Germany faced conflict both externally and internally. Fighting broke out on the eastern frontier, while various political groups struggled bitterly to gain the upper hand in government. With Berlin in the throes of revolution and its aftermath, a new republic was planted in the relative tranquillity of the Saxon city of Weimar.

The first years of the Weimar Republic were characterised by extreme political fragility. Despite its impeccable democratic credentials, the young seedling was perpetually under threat. Mutual recriminations abounded. On the right, the myth of the *Dolchstoßlegende* - the 'stab in the back' supposedly delivered by the Socialists to the German military - was born. On the left, radical Socialists prepared for a thoroughgoing Soviet-style revolution. In the centre, politicians such as Matthias Erzberger, a warmonger-turned-pacifist, strove to keep the militants apart. Erzberger's signing of the armistice was to cost him his life. He was murdered by right-wing assassins in 1921. Weimar had few champions of its own and survived its infancy only through the efforts of each side to prevent political power falling to their opponents.

The cycle of violence began when the President of the new Reichstag in Berlin, Friedrich Ebert, arranged a pact with the head of the military, General Wilhelm Groener. Overestimating the danger from the Soviet-style Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, Ebert courted the army, then agreed to accept the support of military circles that were fundamentally hostile to his political aims. By the same act, he diminished the influence of his natural supporters - the largely Socialist councils.

In Breslau, the overthrow of the imperial authorities passed off without major disturbance. On 8 November, a Loyal Appeal for the citizens to uphold their duties to the Kaiser was distributed in the names of the Lord Mayor, Paul Matting, Archbishop Bertram and others. But it had no great effect. The Commander of the VI Army Corps, General Pfeil, was in no mood for a fight. He released the political prisoners, ordered his men to leave their barracks, and, in the last order of the military administration, gave permission to the Social Democrats to hold a rally in the *Jahrbunderthalle*. The next afternoon, a group of dissident airmen arrived from their base at Brieg (Brzeg). Their arrival spurred the formation of 'soldiers' councils' (that is, Soviets) in several military units and of a 100-strong Committee of Public Safety by the municipal leaders. The Army Commander was greatly relieved to resign his powers.

The *Volksrat*, or 'People's Council', was formed on 9 November 1918, from Social Democrats, union leaders, Liberals and the Catholic Centre Party. It was led by the Socialist Paul Löbe. Its relations with its opponents were largely peaceful. In its dealings with the officials of the previous administration, it made no attempt to remove them, but merely assigned representatives to facilitate cooperation. It then widened its remit to serve as a central executive for the province of Silesia as a whole. As Löbe noted in his memoirs, the 'revolution' in Breslau was evidently as consensual as possible:

*The coming of the new constellation of power passed in Breslau with surprising calmness, even with celebration . . . Three regiments of artillery and infantry, led by the soldiers' councils, marched into the Qabrhunderthalle. An endless stream of Breslauers followed . . . The powerful organ roared out the Marseillaise . . . Then the builder of the hall, Max Berg, dedicated it as a 'Cathedral of Democracy'. Fritz Voigt . . . spoke in the name of the soldiers, and I spoke for the Social Democratic Party . . . We had brought about a quiet revolution, no human life had been sacrificed and no damage had been done.'*

Across Germany, delicate political balancing acts of this sort were soon unsettled by the return of large numbers of demobilised - and often demoralised - soldiers. In Breslau, the *Volksrat* discovered that some 170,000 soldiers and displaced persons were expected to return to a city that could muster emergency quarters for little more than 47,000. The resultant overcrowding radicalised Breslau politics and contributed to the worrying set of social statistics (see below).

It was at this juncture that Ebert had cause to call on the support of the military. In early January 1919 the Spartacist League had taken to the streets of Berlin, hoping to foment Communist revolution and declaring the Ebert government to be the enemy of the working class. At its head stood the communists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the latter newly released from imprisonment in Breslau. Facing them were the *Freikorps*, irregular bands of volunteers often with violently anti-Communist views, who were called on

by a High Command that feared the susceptibility of the regular army to Communist propaganda. Throughout the spring of 1919, the Spartacists were mercilessly suppressed. Many - including Liebknecht and Luxemburg - were shot out of hand. Communist insurrections elsewhere in Germany, from Bremen to Munich and Düsseldorf to Dresden, were dispatched with similar brutality. The working-class movement sustained a blow from which it did not recover.

The unrest in Berlin was mirrored in the provinces and, for a time, appeared to foreshadow the disintegration of the state. In Silesia, economic dislocation, the unresolved national question, the territorial losses sustained in nearby Posen and the threat of further losses in Upper Silesia were genuine concerns. But, for most people, the prospect of a Communist government was unthinkable. In November 1918, the Breslau *Volksrat* chairman, Paul Lobe, conceded that Silesia would be forced to proclaim itself independent if a Spartacist government were formed in Berlin. Similar sentiments in Upper Silesia inspired a conference in Breslau on 30 December, where representatives of central and local government discussed separation, but fell short of recommending it. Yet the issue of separatism would not go away. In 1919, there were renewed calls for Silesian autonomy and for the inclusion of the province in a future *Oststaat*, which, it was thought, could secede from the Weimar Republic and take the eastern provinces with it. Meanwhile, demands were repeated for the division of Silesia. Despite fears in Berlin that Prussia would unravel, Upper Silesia's request was granted and it became a separate province in October 1919-Breslau was left as the main city of Lower Silesia.

Breslau's strategic location was shifting. Whereas five years before it had been a supply base for the military defences of the frontier with the Russian Empire, it was now the advance post of a very sensitive section of Germany's border with an independent Poland. And Poland, though less powerful militarily than imperial Russia, had stronger political arguments. For the Poles, in line with President Wilson's principles of national self-determination, were laying claim to all districts with a Polish majority.

They were not setting eyes on Breslau itself, but they certainly assumed that Upper Silesia was rightly theirs, together with the eastern districts of Lower Silesia right up to the Vratislavian suburbs on the right bank of the Oder. Moreover, while waiting for the Peace Conference to decide, they showed their determination. In December-January 1918-19, they had driven German troops from the whole of Great Poland. Polish soldiers now occupied trenches so recently occupied by Russians. Breslau's fellow border city of Posen (Poznan) was already in a foreign country. Neighbouring Prague, until recently Austrian, was now the capital of a hostile and previously unknown country called Czechoslovakia. Anxieties spread.

Spartacist rioting in February 1919 was a prelude to a long and difficult summer. The uncertainties of the postwar settlement, coupled with the continued presence in office of one of the symbols of the old regime, the Breslau *Regierungspräsident* Traugott von Jagow, contrived to create a powder keg. That summer the fuse was lit. After a wave of crippling strikes, the railway workers forced the authorities to act. On 28 June a curfew was imposed and a programme of forced labour was ordered for the railwaymen. Not surprisingly, the reaction was violent. The next day, a large crowd, led by sailors and Communists, converged on the main railway station. Angry exchanges between the protesters and the police preceded the arrival of the soldiery. In the aftermath, five protesters lay dead and nineteen injured.

Having saved the republic from the Spartacists, the *Freikorps* soon developed into a similar threat themselves. In March 1920, after government attempts to disband two of the most prominent units, disaffected *Freikorps* members marched on Berlin in support of a right-wing journalist, Wolfgang Kapp. The time seemed ripe. The *Reichswehr* declined to resist the putsch and the defence of the republic was left to a much-weakened working class. However, though the Kappists did seize power, they had little idea of what to do with it. They were paralysed by a general strike and the withdrawal of cooperation by the Civil Service. They failed to exploit the widespread presence of sympathetic *Freikorps* units or to coordinate parallel risings in the provinces.

Only in Breslau did Kapp receive any solid backing. When news of the putsch reached Silesia on the morning of 13 March, the unions called a general strike. The trams stopped at noon. Yet the commander of the Military District, General Count Schmettow, declared himself for the putsch, and four of the region's *Freikorps*, headed by Lowenfeld's Third Marine Brigade, marched into the city 'to preserve public order'. The imperial flag flew at the head of their column. They secured the railway station, the main post office and the City Hall, then arrested the municipal government and suspended several newspapers. Their seizure of power was peaceful until the Aulock Corps withdrew to barracks in Karlowitz (Karlówice). At that point their men were fired upon and an arson attack was made on the barracks at Liebhofs Höhe. The *Freikorps* were swift and brutally thorough in restoring 'order'. They then waited for the news from Berlin, which never came.

Meanwhile, Traugott von Jagow had been made Minister of the Interior in Kapp's government, and he lost no time in settling scores. He immediately purged his Republican opponents, including the Governor of Silesia, Ernst Philipp, the Breslau Chief of Police, Friedrich Voigt, and the SPD Presidents of Breslau, Liegnitz (Legnica) and Frankfurt an der Oder. After less than a week, however, Kapp's government collapsed and melted back into the *Freikorps* milieu from which it had sprung. On 20 March, legal government

returned to Berlin and Breslau's own revolution crumbled. Prisoners were released and the *Freikorps* units withdrew, taking the Kappist administration with them. They had won few admirers. It was said that they had behaved in 'a disgusting fashion', and that they had alienated even the officer corps. An intense campaign of anti-Semitic propaganda had culminated in the brutal murder of the Jewish editor of the *Schlesische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, Bernhard Schottlander.<sup>10</sup> During its retreat, the Aulock Corps massacred eighteen people and wounded scores of others. Seven captured workers disappeared. Hatred of the military was rife.

The Treaty of Versailles stands centre stage in the domestic and foreign affairs of the Weimar Republic. Signed on 28 June 1919, five years to the day after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, and forty-seven years after William I's proclamation as German Emperor, it was the defining document of interwar Germany. A mixture of American idealism, British pragmatism and French *revanchisme*, it contained the seeds of Weimar's discontent and of its ultimate destruction. Its clauses relating to Germany's military emasculation, her territorial truncation, her admission of war guilt and her burden of reparations soured German politics for a generation.

The territorial losses perhaps rankled most. The Germans had reckoned with the forfeiture of Alsace-Lorraine as a consequence of the lost war, and the cession of small regions, such as that of Eupen-Malmedy to Belgium, was not going to cause an outcry. But the losses in the east came as a profound shock. There, in the traditional playground of Prussia, almost 65,000 square kilometres of territory and more than five million inhabitants were to be severed. Danzig (Gdansk) and Memel were to be handed to international administration, while West Prussia, Upper Silesia and the entire province of Posen were to be surrendered to the reborn Poland.

The loss of Upper Silesia aroused special fears. Without Upper Silesian coal, it was thought that a major part of German industry would grind to a halt. Widespread unrest and even famine were predicted. After the armistice, the political condition of Upper Silesia was extremely precarious. Its municipal politicians saw the admission of Poles to the councils as a prelude to Polish agitation. The tensions were exacerbated by the presence of German paramilitary formations, such as the *Heimatschutz* and the *Freikorps*, whose heavy-handed tactics did little to foster reconciliation.

Matters were not helped by the war of 1919-20 between Poland and Soviet Russia. Western opinion was divided on the merits of the Bolsheviks. But it was united in the belief that the territory of its former Russian ally should remain intact. So when the Poles joined the independent government of Ukraine in driving the Bolsheviks from the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, Western Europe echoed to angry shouts of 'Hands off Russia!' For its part, Communist

propaganda played skilfully on German sensitivities. The Bolsheviks were no less hostile to the 'bourgeois' Weimar Republic than they had been to imperial 'Germany'. But they somehow gave the impression that the Red Army was heading for Berlin in order to liberate it and to overthrow the Versailles *Diktat*. Many Germans cheered them. Many joined them in deriding Poland.. Such was the enthusiasm that several German newspapers, including some in Silesia, announced in August 1920 that Warsaw had fallen, even when it had not.

Though the draft terms of Versailles had reserved the whole of Upper Silesia for Poland, it was agreed, after German protests, that the issue would be decided by a plebiscite. Tensions were such that the agreement sufficed to spark off the first Polish Silesian Rising of August 1919, which centred on Riebnig (Rybnik) and was brutally suppressed by the *Reichswehr*. A second Silesian Rising in August 1920 coincided with the Polish victory in the battle of Warsaw. It was accompanied by widespread rioting in Breslau, directed mainly against the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission, and specifically the French. The Polish Consulate was wrecked, the French Consulate was looted, eight of the Commission's ten cars were destroyed, and the French Consul, M. Terver, was forced to flee. The 'Breslau incident' soon developed into a full-scale international affair, with angry diplomatic notes being ferried between Berlin, Paris and Warsaw. The third Silesian Rising proved by far the most serious. In the Upper Silesian plebiscite of March 1921, 59.4 per cent of voters had opted for Germany and 40.5 per cent for Poland. Howls of Polish outrage arose on the

grounds that the voting had been distorted by a mass influx of German 'outvoters'. Sensing defeats, the Polish Silesian leader, Wojciech Korfanty, raised a force of some 40,000 Polish volunteers to contest the result. Facing them were the *Freikorps* the sole military force available after the drawal of *Reichswehr* units from the plebiscite zone. All the prominent units of the movement were present: the *Landesjägerkorps*, the *Stahlhelm*, the *Jungdeutsche Orden*, the *Rosbach*, *Reinhard* and *Oberland Freikorps* and Heydebreck's *Wehrwölfe*. Two months of skirmishing followed, including the inconclusive pitched battle of Annaberg (Gory Sw. Anny), until the *Freikorps* were dissolved by Ebert in June.

Breslau students were intimately involved. Those of the 'war generation' had numerous opportunities to revive their martial spirit in the postwar years. In 1918-19, they had flocked to defend the county of Glatz (Kłodzko) from Czechoslovak claims. In the summer of 1919, thousands had participated in the protest meetings against the Treaty of Versailles and in the so-called *Hindenburgkammern*. In March 1920, many of them, especially from right-wing corporations such as the Borussia Corps, had joined groups of armed volunteers supporting the Kapp putsch. In 1921, they joined the mass

campaign to organise the German vote in the Upper Silesian plebiscite and the subsequent armed action to defend their victory. The Guttentag and Gogolin battalions of the *Selbstschutz Oberschlesien* consisted mainly of Breslau students who regarded the Polish insurgents as 'bandits'. And, believing that Korfanty's men had been backed by the Polish Army, while they were *not* helped by the *Reichswehr*, they were all too ready to swallow the theory of a renewed 'stab in the back'.

Veterans of the campaign included the Nazi 'martyr' Leo Schlageter, sometime Gauleiter of Silesia, Helmuth Bruckner (1896-?) and the later Chief of Police of Breslau, Edmund Heines (1897-1934). In October 1921, a new partition of Upper Silesia was decreed by the Allied Powers: 61 per cent of the province was to remain in Germany, while four-fifths of the industrial installations, most of the coal fields and the cities of Königshütte (Krolewska Huta) and Kattowitz (Katowice) were to pass to Poland.

The birth pangs of the Weimar Republic culminated in the crisis year of 1923. The pattern of instability proceeded with the abortive Kustrin (Kostrzyn) putsch by *Reichswehr* elements in February, the establishment of pro-Communist governments in Saxony and Thuringia in March and May, and Adolf Hitler's Beer Hall putsch in Munich in November.

The German economy was also deteriorating with astonishing rapidity. The French occupation of the Ruhr at the end of 1922 had begun a spiral of hyperinflation. Taking 1913 as a benchmark, the price index stood at 2.17 in 1918, 4.15 in 1919, 14.86 in 1920 and 19.11 in 1921. After briefly stabilising, it reached 341.82 in 1922, 2,783 in January 1923 and 1,261,000,000,000 by December.

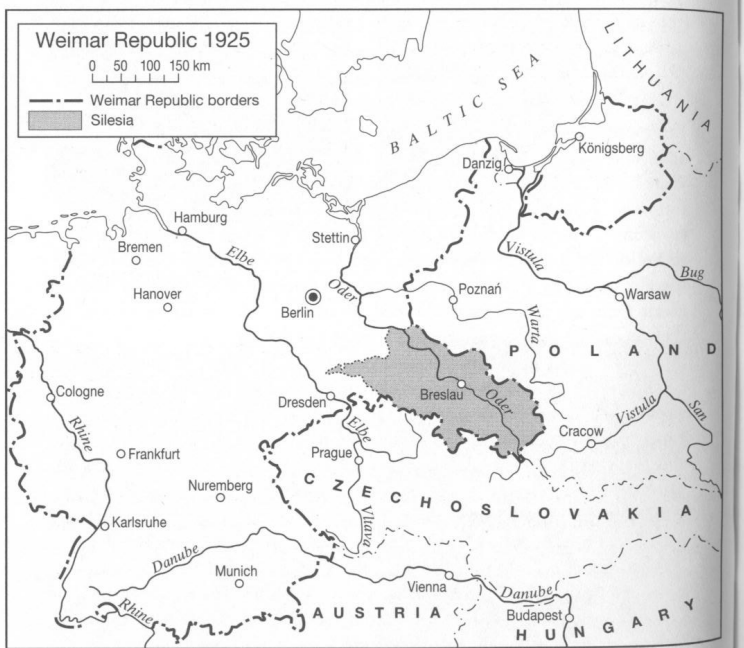
For the ordinary citizen it meant financial ruin. Wages could not keep pace with the almost hourly rises in inflation. A wave of strikes and walk-outs swept the country. Rioting broke out in Breslau's commercial centre on 22 July. About fifty large shops were looted by a mob led by Communist agitators. Six looters were killed. Only the currency reform of November 1923 and the introduction of the *Rentenmark* halted the slide.

The mid-1920s brought a modicum of political stability that was mainly the work of Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929). Under his leadership, a 'Great Coalition' of centrist parties formed late in 1923, enabling an element of consensus to creep into German politics. On this basis, he was able to gain some notable successes. Firstly, the introduction in 1924 of the Dawes Plan fixed a timetable for revised reparations payments. It encouraged the German economy to stabilise, and the new Reichsmark was once again tied to the gold standard. Secondly, following the pariahs' Treaty of Rapallo with Soviet Russia of 1922, Stresemann's efforts bore fruit in the Treaty of Locarno (1925) and the reintegration of Germany into the 'polite society' of European nations. He

negotiated admission to the League of Nations in 1926 and signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, outlawing aggressive war, two years later. Yet his agenda was not one of unquestioning compliance. Having formerly supported the Kapp putsch, his own outlook was decidedly revisionist, though he did not pursue his goals by overt confrontation. The terms of the Locarno Pact guaranteed Germany's frontiers in the west, thereby placating France and Britain, but maintained an ominous silence about Germany's borders in the east. Breslauers did not fail to notice. In their eyes, the whole postwar settlement was unjust.

The election results of the Stresemann era in Silesia demonstrated a certain return to normality. There were three electoral regions: Liegnitz and Breslau in Lower Silesia, and Oppeln (Opole) in Upper Silesia. While Lower Silesia maintained a solid Socialist majority in the elections of 1924 and 1928, with one-quarter of the vote going to the nationalist German National People's Party (DNVP), in Oppeln the Catholic Centre Party was dominant. Less than three weeks after its rebirth in Munich in 1925, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) was established in Silesia, when Helmuth Bruckner, a veteran of the First World War and the Upper Silesian Risings, wrote to Hitler pledging his 'unconditional support'. Yet since Hitler was forbidden to speak in Prussia, the NSDAP found it very difficult to gain a foothold. In some quarters it was viewed with ridicule when it could not afford to supply the requisite brown shirts and swastikas. Its weakness was demonstrated by the Reichstag results for Silesia in 1928, when it garnered approximately 1 per cent of the vote, well below the 2.6 per cent national average.

Stresemann, the architect of Weimar's brief blossoming, died in October 1929 just a few weeks before the Wall Street Crash, which swept away all his hard work. The German economy — so dependent on short-term US loans — went into meltdown through the collapse of the US stock market. Following a run on the banks, unemployment rose almost exponentially from 1.3 million in September 1929 to three million a year later. It reached six million (one in three of the working population) by the beginning of 1933. The political instability that had so dogged Weimar's early life now returned with a vengeance. In March 1930, normal government was abandoned in favour of a cabinet relying on presidential decree. Thereafter, a series of short-lived governments made increasing use of the President's powers as parliamentary sittings and legislation were marginalised. The suspension of the democratic process only served to weaken public faith in democracy and to strengthen popular support for the anti-democratic parties - above all for the Communists and the Nazis.



The Reichstag election results of September 1930 made shocking reading for democratic politicians. Of the parties that had made up the Weimar coalitions of the 1920s only the Catholic Centre Party emerged unscathed, maintaining its 12 per cent share of the vote. The DNVP vote was halved; the SPD lost 6 per cent, but still emerged as the largest single party. The only main parties to register an increase were the Communist KPD; up from 10 per cent to 13 per cent with seventy-seven seats; and the Nazis, up from 2.6 per cent in 1928 to 18 per cent with 107 seats. One of those seats was won by the Nazi member for Breslau, Helmuth Bruckner, returned with 24.2 per cent of the vote.

Weimar was lurching towards its denouement. Despite the success in 1932 of the Hoover Moratorium, which signalled the end of reparation payments, no subsequent government was able to deal with the economic crisis. Nazi and

Communist strength continued to grow, apparently in direct correlation with the unemployment figures. In January 1931, hostile demonstrations greeted the Chancellor's visit to Breslau. The words 'death to Briining' and 'death to the hunger dictatorship' were daubed on many walls.<sup>1</sup> Even the Nazis were impoverished. In February 1931, the SA (Sturmabteilung, or 'stormtroopers') in Silesia was complaining to its chief, Ernst Rohm, that its Breslau company could not turn out for inspection because it completely lacked footwear. Eighteen months later, the Silesian SA Commander, Edmund Heines, noted that 60 per cent of his men were long-term unemployed.

The battles of the Communists and Nazis were played out in towns and streets all over Germany. In June 1931, the annual national rally of the veterans' association, the *Stahlhelm*, was held in Breslau. It was the occasion for violent clashes and equally violent rhetoric. The leader of the *Stahlhelm*, Franz Seldte, made a solemn undertaking:

*The life and death struggle of the German nation will be decided here in the east. . . And let this be our vow that we take this [day] . . . that we will never pause, never rest, until all German soil that has drunk of the blood and sweat of numerous German generations has come back to the Reich.*

Silesia appears to have been a hotbed of paramilitary activity. Periodic unrest throughout 1932 culminated in the notorious case of the 'Potempa Six'. In the small hours of 10 August, a group of drunken SA men entered a farmhouse near Gross Strehlitz (Strzelce Opolskie) and attacked one of the inhabitants, Konrad Pietzuch, a Pole with Communist sympathies. He was beaten with a billiard cue, kicked and finally shot. The murderers were tried in Beuthen (Bytom) and sentenced to death, but became a *cause celebre* of the Nazi Party, with Hitler famously declaring that 'German men will never be condemned because of a Pole'. A week after the Potempa murder, a woman in Breslau was arrested for kicking an SA man. She was sentenced to fifteen months imprisonment. The Potempa Six walked free.

That summer, Breslau itself saw spiralling violence. On 23 June, a column of SA men, led by Edmund Heines, was attacked by Communists and eleven were seriously injured. Three days later, a young member of the Socialist self-defence organisation, the *Reichsbanner*, was shot dead. In early August, a police raid on a Nazi safehouse led to the confiscation of a machine-gun, 1,450 rounds of ammunition and twenty-three handgrenades. On 6 August, grenades were thrown during running battles between left and right. Two days later, another grenade was hurled into the bedroom of a prominent Socialist leader.

Hitler made his first visit to Breslau as part of the campaign for the Reichstag elections of July 1932. He employed startlingly modern election-

earing techniques, flying between venues and holding numerous events on any given day. On the evening of 18 April, for example, he gave four speeches: at Beuthen at 6 p.m., at Grlitz two hours later and then two in Breslau. The first, at the Grüneiche Radrennbahn, attracted 6,000 listeners, while at the second, at the *Jahrhunderthalle*, some 10,000 faithful were treated to an embittered attack on the 'Weimar parties':

*Meine deutschen Volksgenossen und Volksgenossinnen!*

*What you see here, and across Germany, is a sign of the rebirth of the German nation. For almost 14 years the ruling parties have promised us the earth and driven us into the ground . . .*

*Fate gave them 14 years, more than enough. In 14 years Bismarck led Prussia out of despair to the unification of the German Empire, saving the German people from fragmentation and creating that which even we had the honour to experience. In 14 years they have destroyed not only their own efforts, but also the toil of generations . . .*

*They are now recognised as the greatest incompetents and dilettantes in history!*

*... I know what they are thinking. They think they can wear us down; that we will tire of the struggle. They are wrong. They can do what they will: deny our propaganda, confiscate our pamphlets, tear down our posters, restrict our newspaper circulation. They can refuse us access to the radio, ban our films, dissolve the SA, the SS and the entire Party. They can terrorise us. They can kill us . . .*

*But we will never surrender.*

Hitler spent the night at the Monopol Hotel. His efforts had the desired effect. Against a national average of 37.4 per cent, his party took 43.5 per cent of the Breslau vote. It was the third-highest Nazi return in Germany (after Hanover East with 49.5 per cent and Schleswig-Holstein with 51 per cent) and well above the SPD showing of 24.4 per cent.

By the end of that year, therefore, the Nazis controlled the largest group in the Reichstag. The politicians, who had strenuously avoided asking Hitler to enter government, were finally brought to think the prospect inevitable. On 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany at the invitation of President Hindenburg.

The date of 30 January 1933 is conventionally taken to be the opening day of the Third Reich and the last day of democracy. Yet it should not be forgotten that Hitler had been constitutionally appointed head of a coalition government and that the Weimar Republic had been ruled by distinctly undemocratic methods for almost three years. In January 1933, Hitler was still some distance from being an absolute dictator. Yet the process that was to create his dictatorship was put in motion almost immediately. The Third Reich was officially declared seven months later, on 1 September.

The moment in January when Hitler assumed power was recalled by the son of a Breslau doctor, then a seven-year-old boy, who lived in the Kaiser-Wilhelmstrasse and who was looking through the window:

*I was sitting with my mother on the edge of the bed and was watching two postal employees who, with an immense effort, were trying to raise a huge flag on the mast of the Post Office [opposite]. A gust of wind suddenly caught the flag and blew it open to full length. It was a flag with the swastika. My mother, who was not usually given to sentimentality, seized my hand as tears of joy ran down her face. She looked at me and told me in a voice quivering with emotion: 'This is a wonderful day, a day that you must always remember. From today, a new era begins for Germany, a better time. At last, the end of the misery and poverty that [has afflicted] so many people, has arrived. Justice will reign once more, and a wonderful future awaits you . . .*

At the time, he thought nothing of the fact that his mother's name was Jadwiga Wiczorek, or that his maternal grandfather could not speak German properly. All he knew was that his own father, a former military surgeon, had recently joined the NSDAP with enthusiasm. Nearly seventy years later, he would ask: 'Can one ever tell these things and be understood?

Breslau supplied a good example of the consolidation of Nazi power in the provinces. SA units and police turned on their opponents as soon as word of Hitler's appointment spread. The planning of a Communist rally was disrupted by the arrival of some 500 SA men, who, with police support, paraded in front of the Communist ranks. Violence inevitably ensued and was brutally crushed by the police. In the subsequent rioting, shots were fired and an unemployed labourer was killed. All Communist rallies were banned as a threat to public order.

After January 1933, the *Gleichschaltung* or 'coordination' of social and political life was rapidly realised. In Breslau, it was completed by the appointments of Nazi Gauleiter Bruckner as Lower Silesian *Oberpräsident* and of Silesian SA chief Heines as Breslau Police Chief. Elsewhere in the province it was just as thorough. All fourteen Silesian *Oberbürgermeister* were replaced; and only three of the forty-eight *Landräte*, or regional administrators, survived in office until March. That month Silesia's first concentration camp was established in the Breslau suburb of Diirgoy (Tarnogaj). Though short-lived, it was to house many of the prominent Socialists of the region, including former Reichstag President Paul Lobe, the former Lower Silesian President, Heinrich Lüdemann, and the former Mayor of Breslau, Karl Mache. In the Reichstag elections that spring Breslau was one of only seven constituencies to return an absolute Nazi majority. Against a national average of 43.2 per cent, it scored 50.2 per cent; Liegnitz scored 54.0 per cent. The election turned out to be the prelude to the

Reichstag granting Hitler 'emergency powers' and to the creation of a formal Nazi dictatorship.

Vicious events occurred across Germany. The SA moved against each of its political enemies. Legality was supplied by a rump-Reichstag in Berlin cowed by Nazi stormtroopers. The nationwide suppression of the Communists was completed by the ban in February, which followed the Reichstag fire. The trade unions and the Social Democrats were picked off in turn. The trade-union offices in Breslau were stormed by SA units in March, when two employees were killed. In May the unions were dissolved and were forcibly incorporated into the huge, Nazi-run Labour Front (DAF). The Socialists, having refrained from extra-parliamentary activity, succumbed in June, when they too were outlawed as inimical to the German state and people. In April, SA units raided several Breslau bookshops, confiscating works by Stefan Zweig, Thomas Mann and Emile Zola. Three Polish students at the university were taken to Nazi Party headquarters and severely beaten. In May, a ritual burning of works by 'Jewish and Marxist' authors was held on the Schlossplatz.

Despite such outrages, everyday life for those people left unmolested by the regime actually improved. The domestic economy recovered. In 1935, the level of industrial production of 1928 was restored. The number of unemployed fell. Nationally, unemployment dropped from 4.8 million in 1933 to 2 million in 1935 and was practically eliminated by 1939. In Silesia the jobless figure fell from almost 500,000 in 1933 to 154,000 by 1935.

Meanwhile, the limits of Nazi power in 1933-4 can be illustrated by one of President Hindenburg's very last decrees. In July 1934, he ordered that all war veterans who had seen active service under fire should be awarded a medal entitled *Ehrenkreuz der Frontkämpfer*, or 'Frontline Honour Cross'. All such veterans were to be presented with the medal by local officials, together with a certificate signed by Chancellor Hitler. By 1934 many of the officials were Nazis. A proportion of the veterans were Jewish, but they had to be given their medals like everyone else. Dr Alexander Walk, for example, the local physician at Nimkau (Miekinia) near Breslau, got his medal from the *Landrat* of Neumarkt (Sroda). It was to save his life.

The darker side of Nazi rule became increasingly apparent. After the elimination of the party's opponents, the summer of 1934 saw an internal party feud - the so-called 'Night of the Long Knives' - in which the 'Socialist' wing of the movement, along with much of the SA, was liquidated.

Already, in April 1933, SPD sources had reported a gun battle on the streets of Breslau between rival units of the SA. They thought it reflected the fundamental social split in the Nazi membership and Hitler's betrayal of working-class interests. The next year, it was clear that the SA's days were numbered. The stormtroopers were considered by the party leadership to be an

undisciplined group that took the 'Socialist' element of 'National Socialism' too seriously. Silesia, as a bastion of its power, was to witness the slaughter at first hand. Udo von Woysch (1895-1983), *SS-Oberführer* and Himmler's *Sonderkommissar* for Silesia, was to lead the operation. He was ordered to arrest certain SA leaders and occupy the Breslau police headquarters. In fact, he went much further. His men ran amok. The Breslau Police President, Edmund Heines, was summarily executed. His deputy, Hans Engels, was taken to nearby woods and blasted with a shotgun. The one-armed former Silesian *Freikorps* leader, Peter von Heydebreck, died proclaiming 'Long live the Führer!', apparently unaware that the Führer had ordered his execution. The Gauleiter, Bruckner, was expelled from the province and stripped of office. In the aftermath, an extended and bloody 'clean-up' operation against the Silesian SA was brought to a close only through Göring's personal intervention.

Having cleared the field for action, the Nazi Party began to move against its alleged racial enemies. Punitive measures against the Jews had been promoted from the outset. A boycott of Jewish shops was attempted in April 1933 and Jews were excluded from the Civil Service and other professions. But the main body of anti-Semitic legislation began in 1935. The Nuremberg Laws decreed racial and genealogical definitions of Jewishness, while depriving the Jewish community of their legal rights. Criminal penalties were imposed on marriages between Jews and Gentiles and on any form of sexual relations. In April 1935, a Breslau woman was pilloried for her relationship with a Jewish man. The fate of her lover is unknown. Much of the Jewish community became 'non-persons' overnight. In due course, the *Reichskristallnacht* of November 1938 underlined the fact that the new Germany had no place for Jews.

The details of how the Breslau SS received and executed their orders on *Kristallnacht* have been reconstructed both from postwar trials in Germany and from the reports of the Polish Consul, Leon Koppens. They make depressing reading. They also suggest a high degree of planning. According to the Consul's report to Warsaw, he was already aware at 8 p.m. on 9 November that the SS had orders for an '*Aktion*' German records state that the *SS-Oberabschnitt Südost* in Breslau received a message from Berlin at 1.09 a.m. on the 10th, telling their commanding officer, Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, to place an urgent call to a hotel in Munich, where Reinhard Heydrich was staying. Everything points to a scenario where Heydrich simply gave his final command to execute orders that had been prepared in advance. Heydrich talked of 'the demonstration'. In Breslau, uniformed SS and SA units were on the move within twenty minutes of the call being made. At 2 a.m., *Wehrmacht* sappers put the first explosive charges under the New Synagogue. Compliant journalists were on hand to take notes. The following day, the *Schlesische Tageszeitung* published two articles: one '*Wie Breslau mit den Juden abrechnete*' ('How Breslau got even with the Jews') and

the other '*Demonstrationen auch in ganz Schleisen*' ('Demonstrations throughout Silesia'). A passer-by remarked, 'I was in the Middle Ages.'

Unusually in relation to the rest of the Reich, where 'Crystal Night' has been described as an urban phenomenon, the Silesian SS targeted every single village and hamlet where Jews were living. They smashed their way through Brückenberg (Bierutowice), Gottesberg (Boguszow) and Habelschwerdt (Bystrzyca Kłodzka) to Sprottau (Szprotawa), Striegau (Strzegom) and Strehlen (Strzelin) (see below). In Trebnitz (Trzebnica), they forced the Jews of the village to set the synagogue alight themselves. Then they cut the beards of the men and arrested them; the women were released. A special SS squad from Breslau, under Criminal Commissar Schubert, headed for the Zionist *Auswandererlehrgut* camp at Gross Breesen (Brzezno), which trained candidates in agriculture and crafts before sending them to Palestine. The staff were arrested, the farm buildings smashed and robbed. *SS-Oberführer* Katzmann reported his achievements to Berlin:

*In Breslau alone, 1 synagogue (burned), 2 synagogues (demolished), 1 building of the 'Society of Joy' (demolished), at least 500 shops (completely destroyed), 10 Jewish Inns (demolished), 35 other Jewish enterprises (demolished) and 600 men arrested . . .*

Historians who know what the Nazi regime perpetrated in the 1940s are sometimes distracted from making a realistic assessment of the 1930s. Of course, between 1933 and 1939 Hitler was consciously engaged in what he regarded as a preparatory phase for greater things to come. He was laying the foundations for a scheme that he had outlined in *Mein Kampf*, but which he did not expect to mature during his first decade in power. He was preparing for a general war to overthrow the Versailles settlement and to conquer his longed-for eastern *Lebensraum*. But he did not think that Germany would be ready for a general, as opposed to a local, war before 1942-3 at the earliest. So the fact is that in the 1930s many aspects of Nazism were at best latent. In its pre-war peacetime mode, Nazism fell significantly short of its subsequent wartime nadir. What is more, it fell significantly short of the atrocities that Stalin had been perpetrating on a grand scale in the USSR for many years. By 1939, as is now known for certain, the Soviets had already murdered far more human beings than the Nazis would ever do. The Kulak Campaign or the Ukrainian Terror Famine had no parallels in the pre-1939 Reich. The 'Great Terror', which Stalin unleashed against his own party and which consumed up to a million lives, makes the 'Night of the Long Knives' look like a petty disturbance. The Gulag system, which was already twenty years old, completely dwarfed the Nazi KZ (concentration camp) system, which was still in its infancy. By collectivising the land, by nationalising all commerce and industry

and by killing the cream of the Red Army officer corps, Stalin had entered on regions of totalitarian control where Hitler would never dare to tread. These considerations have more than a theoretical bearing. They facilitate comparative analysis without which no valid judgements can be made. But to some extent they also enable an understanding of the Nazis' exaggerated hatred of 'Bolshevism', which, though visceral and largely unsubstantiated, was nonetheless used as a central justification for the regime and which many fearful Germans shared. Racism was the one aspect of theory and practice that set the Nazis apart, not only from the Soviets, but from other Fascists, like Mussolini or Franco. The belief in a racial hierarchy of humanity was absolutely fundamental to the Nazi creed, and it has given them a reputation for surpassing evil. It led them to view the world in terms of 'superhumans' and 'subhumans', of 'desirables' and 'undesirables'. Yet, in the 1930s, the practical applications of Nazi racism were still in gestation. The so-called 'Euthanasia Campaign', which began in August 1939 and would account for 70-80,000 clinical murders in Germany and Austria, was the sole pre-war instance where theoretical schemes for extermination reached the point of execution. Code-named 'T-4 Aktion', from the address at Tiergarten 4 in Berlin, whence the operations were coordinated, it involved much more than the 'mercy-killing' of incurables or the terminally ill. It was a systematic attempt, initiated on the express orders of the Führer, to kill every person in the Reich who was mentally or physically disabled. It spelt an automatic sentence of death on every cripple, every epileptic, every schizophrenic, every spastic, everyone with a genetic deformity, every Down's Syndrome sufferer, everyone diagnosed with Alzheimer's, motor-neurone disease or cystic fibrosis. All these innocent people were condemned to be transported involuntarily to one of six designated death centres to be gassed or lethally injected, to be issued with false death certificates and cremated without trace.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Breslau was touched by the 'T-4 Aktion', like every other city in the Reich. Indeed, the patients of the university medical clinics, especially in psychiatry and neurology, and of the municipal mental asylum on Einbaumstrasse, would have been automatic targets. The directors of these institutes received Registration Form No. 1 from T-4 HQ, instructing them, for purposes of 'economic planning', to list all persons in their care who suffered from a set of illnesses, who had been designated criminally insane or who had been resident inmates for more than five years. They were told to return the completed form within three to ten weeks. Roving teams of T-4 assessors would then arrive to check the returns against reality. Many victims thereby learned of their fate in advance, and in some instances wrote farewell letters to their families. In due course, the incredibly named 'T-4 Community Patient Transport Service' would send a convoy of trucks or buses



to pick up the patients. It took them to the pre-prepared facilities where white-coated 'medics', false shower rooms, extraction of gold teeth, the excision of body parts and incineration awaited. Next of kin would be scrupulously informed within days that their relative had unfortunately died from 'pneumonia', 'a stroke or 'breathing problems'. The two such facilities closest to Breslau were in the Brandenburg Prison complex near Berlin and at Sonnenstein Castle near Pirna in Saxony. Sporadic protests were lodged by both Protestant and Catholic clergy. The Führer would later regret that greater secrecy had not been maintained for his solution to 'life unworthy of life'. Cardinal Bertram wrote a protestatory memorial on the matter on 16 July 1941 - but to no effect. The crime had been committed.

Bolstered by a booming economy, by increased armaments production and by labour-intensive public-works projects, such as the construction of *Autobahns*, Germany gained the confidence to reach out for Hitler's primary foreign-policy goal - the dismantling of the Versailles settlement. Germany had withdrawn from the League of Nations in 1933. The return of the Saarland and the introduction of conscription in 1935, as well as the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936, increased the pace of events. In 1938 the *Anschluss* with Austria was achieved. At Munich in September, Germany annexed the Sudeten regions of Czechoslovakia. In 1939, the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia, the creation of a Slovak puppet administration and the seizure of the so-called Memelland from Lithuania completed the first stage of Hitler's foreign campaign. 'Greater Germany' had become a reality, virtually without a shot being fired.

Breslau, which lay immediately to the north-east of the 'Sudetenland', was intimately affected by the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten Germans, who lived on the Bohemian side of the Giant Mountains, were indistinguishable from those who lived on the Silesian side. They formed part of a single, regional community. Their leader, Konrad Henlein, came from the town of Maffersdorf near Reichenberg, which was not twenty kilometres from the Silesian border. Moreover, they had genuine grievances. They had been incorporated into Czechoslovakia without any regard for the principle of national self-determination; they had not been treated as equals by the government in Prague; and they had been suffering the highest rate of unemployment in the country. So, for the Nazis, they constituted a heaven-sent instance of political fodder that was exploited to the full. In all the Nazi-inspired events in Breslau in the 1930s, Sudeten delegations, Sudeten parades and Sudeten costumes were visible at every turn.

Breslau participated to the full in the excitement of the heady days of the Munich Crisis'. Breslau Radio was one of three German broadcasting centres that were pumping propaganda into the Sudetenland and transforming

Henlein's *Sudetendeutsche Partei* into an instrument of Nazi policy. Breslau was the headquarters of the Army Group, whose tanks and soldiers were manning the frontier with northern Bohemia and threatening to invade. The gap between the Iser and the Giant Mountains seemed to be in their sights. Breslau was the place where all the reports, and rumours and refugees from that northern sector were collected. One of the troublespots was at Reichenberg (Liberec), just twenty-four kilometres from Silesia, whence besieged opponents of Henlein had appealed to Lord Runciman's mission and where serious rioting took place in mid-September. Yet in most frontier settlements the disturbances were not excessively violent. 'In at least fifteen villages and towns in the frontier districts', a British reporter wrote, 'crowds collected in the main squares and streets, sang *Deutschland über Alles* and the Horst Wessel song, and then dispersed. In one or two places, the demonstrators shouted "We want a plebiscite".' When Czechoslovak authorities restored order, the Nazi reaction was hysterical: '... the complete lack of control and the wild Hussite spirit of the Czech police and soldiery may produce an extremely grave situation,' roared the *Volksische Beobachter*. 'We know how unbearable it is', thundered Goring, 'that a miserable people — God knows where they come from - should be oppressing a highly civilised people. We know who is backing these ridiculous pygmies in Prague - it is Moscow.' Hitler's thoughts were relayed by radio from the rally at Nuremberg:

*The misery of the Sudeten Germans is without end. The Czechs want to annihilate them ... I say that if those tortured creatures cannot obtain rights and assistance by themselves they can obtain both from us ... I demand that the oppression of 3,500,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia shall cease and be replaced by the right of self-determination.*

Two weeks later, by international agreement, Hitler was given what he wanted. The *Wehrmacht* occupied the Sudetenland unopposed. The Sudeten Germans and the Silesian Germans who had been politically separated for 198 years were reunited. Five months after that, Hitler was in Prague.

In late 1938, Germany's attention had turned to Poland. German claims to Danzig, to the so-called Polish Corridor, and to Upper Silesia were staked ever more vociferously. The pressure was enormous. Yet the Poles proved far less supine than their neighbours. They refused to yield, rejected all Nazi threats and blandishments and the idea of Soviet assistance. Hitler, emboldened by the hesitations of the West, prepared for a military showdown. The secret protocols of a non-aggression pact with the USSR, signed on 23 August 1939, put the last pieces into place.

When it came, the Second World War began in Silesia. At 8 p.m. on 31 August, German units led by the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) carried out a phoney

attack on a German radio station in Gleiwitz (Gliwice), close to the Polish border. Among the force were a number of convicted criminals, presumably participating on the promise of remission. After bursting into one of the studios, the attackers broadcast a patriotic announcement in Polish, sang a rousing Polish chorus and departed. The convicts, carefully dressed in Polish uniforms, were then mown down by the SS. The 'provocation' was complete. Breslau Radio announced that the Reich had been treacherously invaded by Poland. At 4.40 a.m. the next day, 1 September, the German cruiser *Schleswig Holstein* opened fire on the Polish enclave at Westerplatte in Danzig harbour. All along the frontier German forces launched their planned *Blitzkrieg*, Poland fought back. The Second World War had begun.

The new era that dawned on 9 November 1918 posed many difficult challenges to the German economy. It brought considerable overcapacity in many areas of wartime production and precipitated large-scale unemployment. It swept away much of the traditional network of suppliers and markets. Most seriously, it left Silesia as an isolated strip of territory squeezed between two hostile neighbours, Poland and Czechoslovakia, whose passion for economic autarky spelt danger.

The first crisis to hit was caused by the cession of eastern Upper Silesia to Poland in 1921. At the stroke of a pen, Germany lost 3,000 square kilometres, rich mineral resources, valuable industrial plants and around 400,000 skilled workers. It lost the industrial cities of Kattowitz, Königshütte, Mysłowitz (Mysłowice) and Tarnowitz (Tarnowskie Góry). It lost fifty-three of the province's sixty-seven coal mines, 75 per cent of its pig-iron production and a majority of its zinc mines. Many of these concerns had formerly been supplied and supported by the manufacturing and service industries of Breslau. The consequences were necessarily serious.

The expected unemployment arrived. The decade of inflation that culminated so disastrously in 1923 was coupled with a demographic crisis of demobilised soldiers and refugees, which threatened severe social unrest. In 1919, Breslau alone accounted for some three-fifths of Silesia's unemployed, while Upper Silesia showed relatively low levels of unemployment. Furthermore, the official figures were dwarfed by the legions of 'unofficial jobless'. In May 1919 the municipal Labour Exchange noted that 6,280 people were looking for work, while only some 3,856 were receiving benefit. Thereafter, a wave of strikes affected the railways and the metallurgical industry, not least the Linke-Hofmann works.

The years of crisis came to a head in 1923, when the inflation that had been endemic in the German economy since 1913 ran completely out of control. By December of that year the Reichsmark was in freefall at more than a billion times its former value. In Breslau, a litre of milk cost 240,000,000,000 marks;

an egg, 246,000,000,000. The Linke-Hofmann works, mindful of the recent unrest, brought freshly minted banknotes from Berlin to distribute wages twice a day, in a vain attempt to counteract their almost instantaneous depreciation.

The political stabilisation of the mid-1920s brought substantial improvements to the socioeconomic conditions, but Breslau still languished at the wrong end of Germany's major statistical indices. Unemployment continued to rise. In January 1925, the city had 6,672 persons unemployed and receiving support; a year later, the figure had almost trebled to 15,444. By late 1929, it had reached 23,978, with only Chemnitz returning worse figures. Poverty was widespread. Per capita income in Breslau was less than half that of Frankfurt-am-Main, while 6.8 per cent of Breslau families lived on welfare support compared to 2.9 per cent in Leipzig and 2.5 per cent in Dresden. In such conditions, health inevitably suffered. The rate of infant mortality in Breslau, for example, at 12.9 per cent of all live births, was worse than all comparable German cities. Local government did little to ease the situation. In 1929 it earmarked only 3.5 Reichmarks per capita for health care, while Berlin set aside 10.1, Frankfurt 8.6 and Cologne 5.3. Poor housing stock served to compound these factors. In 1925, 17 per cent of apartments in the Silesian capital consisted of a single habitable room. This compared to 4.5 per cent in Berlin and 2.4 per cent in Chemnitz. Overcrowding was commonplace. More than two-thirds of all Breslauers lived in apartments with fewer than three habitable rooms.

Breslau's industrial companies spent several years in the doldrums. In the 1920s Linke-Hofmann was sold twice, once to the Lauchhammer concern and then to Busch of Berlin. The Archimedes works joined up for a time with Linke-Hofmann before going into business with a couple of firms from Chemnitz. Bratislavian industry was repeatedly driven to seek outside assistance - in 1925 from the *Sofortprogramm* and in 1930-2 from the *Osthilfe*, or 'Eastern Aid'.

By the time of the worldwide economic crisis of 1929, the Breslauers were espousing radical solutions to their predicament. One in six was unemployed; recruitment to the ranks of the Nazis or Communists was simple and brought with it a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose. At the very least in part, the conversion of a once solidly Social Democratic city to the cause of Nazism must be seen as a thoughtless reaction to the unprecedented economic troubles of the day.

Business picked up after 1932. The installation of the Nazi regime was indubitably a factor, especially when military orders began to be placed. The Linke-Hofmann factory, now called FAMO (*Fahrzeug und Motorenwerke*), did well from its tractors, and even more so from its tanks, building (among other things) versions of the Panzer Mk II and Mk III. In the 1930s Archimedes

trebled its workforce. By 1939, the number of active factories in Breslau was growing, but it still had not returned to the pre-slump position. Breslau undoubtedly benefited from the first peaceful years of the Third Reich, but its economy was slow to recover. In 1936, in a nation where unemployment was becoming a thing of the past, Breslau still returned figures of 10.4 per cent, the worst in Germany. By 1939, export output was only one-fifth of its 1914 level, while waterborne traffic had fallen by a half. Only through the outbreak of war, and the concerted efforts of local and national government, did Breslau begin to share fully in the boom that the rest of Germany was enjoying. By then, Breslau had benefited from the building of the *Autobahn*, and was slowly regaining its traditional role as a commercial centre for East-Central Europe. Progress was facilitated by the establishment of the *Süd-Ost Messe*, or 'South-East Fair', in 1935. Renamed the *Breslauer Messe* two years later, it made a great impact on restoring fortunes.

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In the first half of the twentieth century, religious life in Germany underwent several upheavals. After 1918, all the churches were criticised for the unashamedly patriotic attitudes that were adopted during the First World War and brought no known benefit. They were seen as a prop of the conservative order that had served Germany so badly. Consequently the churches became very defensive. The Weimar Republic was often denounced as ungodly; anti-Semitic statements from the clergy were not uncommon; and, on the fringes, both 'Nordic Christianity' and even neo-paganism made their appearance. In the late 1920s, the growing support for both Communists and Nazis was to some extent connected to the anti-religious stance of the rival totalitarian groups. But many were more than ready to listen to rants about religion being 'the opium of the people' or about the clergy being 'traitors to the nation'.

German Christianity was already in crisis, therefore, before Hitler took power. But the rise of the Nazis posed special problems. In essence, the Nazi regime was fundamentally hostile to traditional religion. Hitler's philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg, was totally opposed to Christianity, and his influence was seen in many of the chants and refrains of the Hitler Youth and the SA: 'We follow not Christ', the Nazis sang, 'but Horst Wessel'; or 'Hang the Jews and put the priests against the wall'. Hitler himself was a lapsed Catholic, who had severed all links with the practices of his childhood. Many of his colleagues, like Himmler, dabbled in neo-paganism; all the symbols and rituals of Nazism, from the sign of the swastika to the cult of torchlights, were non-Christian in origin. The Nazis had no time for Christian saints, while worshipping ancient Germanic heroes and Wagnerian heroines.

Christians were forced either to resist or to accommodate the new political climate. The great majority chose accommodation. The Prussian state Church, which commanded the allegiance of the largest Protestant community in Silesia, found itself in a singularly awkward dilemma. On the one hand, it was trained to pay respect and deference to the state. Its traditional slogan had been 'Throne, Altar and Nation'. And from 1924, it was intimately linked in Breslau to the municipal authorities, when the Lord Mayor and City Treasurer were made ex officio members of the local Evangelical Consistory. On the other hand, when the state was overrun by godless Nazis, its distaste was manifest, yet it could not bring itself to rebel. It preferred pastoral humility to open confrontation, thereby leaving the Nazis free to do their worst. In the reforms of 1938, it lost its rights in the parishes and the Protestant Theological Seminary, and was subjected to an 'Evangelical Deaconry'. Despite such hindrances, the Protestant Church continued to serve its flock. Pastor Konrad Müller (1884—1967), for example, worked undisturbed as minister of Breslau's St John the Baptist Church from 1918 to 1945. He was to become chaplain to the defendants of the Nuremberg Tribunal. His younger colleague, Pastor Joachim Konrad (1903—79) was deprived by the Nazis of his preaching licence, but was nonetheless able to act in 1940-5 as the last Protestant priest of St Elizabeth's Church. After the war, he was to serve in West Germany as Chairman of the Association of Silesian Protestants in exile.

The *Deutsche Christen* (German Christian movement), in contrast, was formed not by 'trimmers', but by active collaborators. Founded in 1932, it adopted the Führer principle through the election of a 'national bishop', inserted numerous 'Aryan paragraphs' into its constitution and subordinated itself totally to the NSDAP. Some of its luminaries even sought to repudiate the Old Testament because of its Jewish authorship. One of the founders of the *Deutsche Christen* was the Silesian Wilhelm Kube (1887-1943), later Gauleiter of 'White Ruthenia' and would-be Gauleiter of Moscow.

The *Bekennende Kirche*, or 'Confessing Church', was alone in its single-minded determination to resist the regime and counteract the complicity of the *Deutsche Christen*. It was formed in 1933 with Pastor Niemöller's 'Provisional Pastoral Union', and was crystallised in 1934 at the Synod of Barmen, where its theological and administrative organisation was established. It bravely denounced Nazi 'paganism' and the 'Führer Cult', and opposed the Nazi-inspired trend for 'deconfessionalisation'. In Silesia, it grouped itself around a network of 'Fraternal Councils'. But in Breslau it endured a painful split. In 1935, one group under Bishop Otto Zanker (1876-1960), the last of the senior Protestant leaders to stay clear of the 'German Christians', signed a declaration of loyalty to the Third Reich. This approach attracted a majority of Vratislavian pastors, but was weakened by Bishop Zanker's forced retirement in 1939. The

minority 'Neustadt Programme' was left as the sole independent Protestant voice. Its chairman, Ernst Hornig (1894-1976), Pastor of St Barbara's Church, led prayers for peace during the Munich Crisis and was to survive the Siege of Breslau. One of its female ministers, Katherine Staritz (1903-53), who dared to assist fugitive Jews, was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp.

The Vratislavian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) was one of the Confessing Church's martyrs and the inventor of the concept of 'Christianity without Religion'. He had left Germany in 1931 to work in the International Ecumenical Movement, yet returned to fight the Nazis' 'contempt for humanity'. Despite being briefly arrested in 1937 and later banned from preaching, he never wavered from the position taken in a broadcast for Radio Berlin in February 1933, when he warned that the Führer (Leader) would become a *Verführer* (a seducer). Active in the resistance circle around Admiral Canaris and the *Abwehr*, he was arrested again in April 1943 and imprisoned in Berlin. Documents linking him to the *Kreisau* conspirators led to his execution in Flossenbürg concentration camp in April 1945. Much was made of his return to Germany from the safety of exile. He had no regrets:

*I want to assure you that I have not regretted coming back for a moment ... I knew quite well what I was doing, and I acted with a clear conscience. I have no wish to cross out of my life anything that has happened since ... I resolved to play a part in Germany's fate. It is with no reproach that I look back on the past and accept the present.*

The majority of German Catholics were no less apprehensive about the regime than the Protestants were. They saw the power and dangers of the Nazi propaganda machine, yet hesitated to make a stand. The position taken by Cardinal Adolf Bertram, Prince-Bishop of Breslau (1858-1945), was perhaps typical. As Chairman of the Bishop's Congress in Fulda from 1919 and head of the largest diocese in Germany, Cardinal Bertram was hugely influential. Yet his political statements were often ambivalent. He claimed to champion the Poles among his flock, but advocated the pro-German cause during the Upper Silesian plebiscite. Prior to 1933, he criticised the demagoguery of Nazism but not specifically its anti-Semitism. After Hitler's seizure of power, he ordered the public reading of Pope Pius XI's twin encyclicals — *Mit brennender Sorge* and *Divine Redemptoris* — which ruled that Nazism and Communism were both incompatible with Christianity. He protested in private to Berlin on numerous topics, including educational policy, Church policy, euthanasia and the treatment of non-Aryan Catholics, especially Poles. Yet he stopped there. As a contemporary noted in 1935, Cardinal Bertram feared a rupture between the Church and the state, since 'the fidelity of many Catholics towards the Church might fail the test'. So he preferred to parry direct attacks on the Church, but

not to fight from principle.

Many people, therefore, deprived of decisive leadership, attempted to combine their allegiance to Christianity with service to the Third Reich. Conflicts inevitably ensued. The Gauleiter and *Oberpräsident* of Silesia in 1934-40, Josef Wagner (1899-1945), was one who came unstuck. A Lorrainer and former official in Westphalia, Wagner had belonged to the first group of twelve Nazi MPs in 1928. Yet as a devout and practising Catholic, he sought to blunt anti-religious legislation and frequently complained about the activities of the SS. As Gauleiter in Breslau, he sent his daughter to the Ursuline School and was himself a frequent communicant at Cathedral Masses. In 1940, he was accused of disclosing classified information to the 'Catholic Action' society. Removed from his posts, he was tried before the Supreme Party Tribunal in January 1942 and, though found not guilty, was jailed and sent to a concentration camp. He was probably shot by the Gestapo in Plotzensee Prison in Berlin.

The fighter-ace Werner Molders (1913-41) was another example of a man who tried to serve two masters. A veteran of the Spanish Civil War, he was given the highest awards for bravery and appointed 'General Inspector of Fighter Pilots', aged only twenty-eight. Yet, as a committed Catholic, he was regularly shadowed by the Gestapo, who kept a lengthy file on him. When he died in a crash-landing at Breslau-Gandau (Gadów), he left a cache of letters that expressed his horror at Nazi killings and called for Catholics to be considered fully fledged Germans. The Gestapo denounced his correspondence as a forgery and Bormann offered a reward of 100,000 marks for information on its 'author'.

The complex currents of religious belief in interwar Germany are perhaps best illustrated in the inspiring life and death of Edith Stein (1891-1942). Born in Breslau into an Orthodox Jewish family, and a graduate of the University of Breslau, where she studied German philology, history and psychology, Stein was a woman of extraordinary intellectual, spiritual and moral powers. Taking an interest in philosophy, she moved to Gottingen, and after an interval as a volunteer nurse in the Austrian army, obtained a Ph.D. *summa cum laude* at Freiburg in 1916. At that stage she regarded herself an atheist, and worked as an assistant to Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology. She also returned to lecture in Breslau. At this point, having read the autobiography of St Teresa of Avila, she converted to Catholicism. It was the last step on a road that had begun several years before, when the widow of a young professor killed during the war told Stein that 'his death had helped her to walk the Way of the Cross of her master'. 'For the very first time,' she wrote later, 'I saw with my own eyes the victory of the Church over . . . death, born from the redemptive suffering of Christ . . . My faithlessness was broken; Judaism faded;

and Christ shone forth in the mystery of the Cross.'

The middle years of Edith Stein's life were taken up by secular scholarship and religious studies. The young academic made an intensive study of St Thomas Aquinas, flitting between conferences in Germany and abroad. She repeatedly tried to be accepted for habilitation, but several universities, including Breslau, rejected her because she was a woman. She finally took a teaching post in the Dominican School at Speyer. Paradoxically, her interest in Judaism returned, and on regular visits to her mother in Breslau she attended the synagogue.

In 1933, in Cologne, Stein entered the closed Order of the Carmelites and took the monastic name of Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. On Maundy Thursday that year, she recorded a mystical vision. 'I conversed with the Saviour', she wrote, 'and I told him I knew His Cross would be placed on the Jewish people . . . when the service ended I felt certain inside me that I had been listened to. But what exactly that carrying of the Cross implied, I did not yet know.' From then on, she devoted herself to contemplation, study and writing. Her principal works were *Temporal and Eternal Existence* and the unfinished *Knowledge of the Cross*. In 1938, to escape Nazi persecution, she moved to the Carmelite Convent at Echt in the Netherlands.

Edith Stein, in the view of the Nazis, belonged to the pseudo-category of 'non-Aryan Christians'. In other words, she was Jewish by race and Christian only by religion. It was a sentence of death. She intended to move yet again to Switzerland, but was caught with her sister in a Nazi round-up of Dutch Jews, which was deliberately activated in response to a protest of the Catholic bishops against Nazi atrocities. She was arrested at Echt on 2 August 1942. Seven days later she perished in the gas chamber at Auschwitz. She was beatified in 1987 and canonised in 1998 as a co-patroness of Europe - not without a vociferous outcry from various American Jewish circles. According to a pamphlet with the imprint of the German Catholic hierarchy: 'It is historically fair to say that Edith Stein was killed as a Jew, although, it is equally fair to believe her own words, when she declared that by this act, she wanted to carry the Cross of Jesus'. As amply shown by the nature of the attacks on Breslau Jewry (see below), the Nazis were no more interested in Judaism than they were in Christianity. They were interested only in their own phoney ideas on race. Non-Jewish converts to Judaism (who were not unknown) were not in danger from the Nuremberg Laws, and so long as Jews were allowed to live, they were free to practise their religion. The Jewish Theological Seminary continued to function normally until closed down in 1938. The old Stork Synagogue in Breslau stayed in use as long as there were Jews to use it. Breslau's New Synagogue, close to Tauentzien Platz, was filled with daily-worshippers until *Reichskristallnacht* in November 1938, when it was blown to

smithereens.

The last of the liberal rabbis of Breslau, Dr Vogelstein, stayed on when most of his flock were leaving, as Walter Laqueur recalled:

*Dr Vogelstein was one of the most cultured men I've ever known and one of the friendliest. He had written an erudite book on Roman history and kept one of the largest private libraries in town. Many's the time I saw him in the bookshops when he would apologise with a smile: 'I'm sure that I have the blessed book somewhere, but for the moment I just can't find it.' The last time I visited him, in 1938, he was a broken man. He was a solid German patriot who had decided to reject all traces of Jewish nationalism. So now his whole world was in ruins. It was the time of Hitler's greatest success, and hence of an unknown future. He was a gentle person, yet there was in him no less the fire of an Old Testament prophet. He quoted for me the passage from Isaiah about the coming Day of Vengeance and - as befits a liberal Rabbi - St Paul's Letter to the Romans, xii, 19. Just as I was about to leave, he presented me, as with a parting gift, with the lines of Friedrich von Logau:*

*Gottesmühlen mahlen langsam,  
Mahlen aber trefflich klein;  
Ob aus Langmut Er sich säumet,  
Bringt mit Scharf Er alles ein.*

*(The mills of God they grind so slow,  
They grind so slow, they grind so fine  
Though He may tarry in His patience  
He will not miss a single grain.)*

Needless to say, Friedrich von Logau (1604-55), whose rhyming epigrams were written as an antidote to the horrors of the Thirty Years War, was - like Dr Vogelstein himself - a Silesian and a stoicist.

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In its cultural development, the Weimar Republic was widely infused with liberal attitudes and modernist styles. Many of the trends had their origins before the First World War, but the political collapse of 1918 brought about a widening of intellectual horizons in a flourishing cultural scene, where conservative criticism mingled with, and tempered, the wilder manifestations of modernism. Having been in the ranks of the avantgarde in imperial Germany, Breslau was well placed after 1918 to strengthen its position.

The Breslau Osteuropa-Institut, established in the summer of 1918, added variety to the scene. Originally intended to assist German exploitation of the

lands gained by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, it lost its ostensible *raison d'être* through Germany's withdrawal from the East. Nevertheless its five departments, including East European law, economics and history, did not become redundant. In conjunction with partner institutes in Danzig (Gdansk) and Königsberg, it addressed a growing demand for knowledge about Europe's turbulent, eastern half. In subsequent years it would be ever more closely identified with German industrial and nationalist circles, and provided support for the realisation of Nazi expansionist aims. (Like SSEES at the University of London, it was a pioneer of what would later be called 'Area Studies'.)

The Academy of Arts lay at the centre of Breslau's cultural world. Reorganised by Hans Poelzig prior to the outbreak of the war, it reached its creative zenith between 1925 and 1931 under the directorship of Oskar Moll (1875-1947). In one view it can be regarded, through its concentration on workshop practice, as 'a predecessor of the first (Weimar) *Bauhaus*. Its links with the Bauhaus were intimate. Poelzig had wanted Walter Gropius to succeed him, and many of the Bauhaus artists and designers also taught in Breslau.

The stage designer Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943), for example, came to the Breslau Academy in 1929 after nine years of teaching at the Bauhaus. The abstract artist Georg Muche (1895-1987), who had worked with Schlemmer on the very first Bauhaus exhibition of 1923, came in 1931. Indeed, between them, the lecturers and students of the Breslau Academy represented almost all of the main artistic trends of the Weimar period. The Munich New Secession', a protest against Impressionism, was co-founded by Alexander Kanoldt, who taught in Breslau in the late 1920s, and by Otto Mueller, a celebrated painter of nudes and gypsies. Kanoldt went on to become one of the stars of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or 'New Objectivity', a reaction against Expressionism, which was associated with names such as Otto Dix, Georg Grosz and Carlo Mense. Among its students, the academy trained Expressionist artists like Alexander Camaro, Willy Jaeckel and Ludwig Meidner, and the sculptor Joachim Karsch. Many years later, from the safety of exile, the graphic artist Johannes Molzahn, who had been Oskar Moll's pupil and colleague, wrote to Moll's widow Margarethe:

*Everything that I have seen and experienced since those Breslau years has only strengthened my earlier conviction, that the Academy under Oskar Moll was a classic example of an artistic-educational institution in the contemporary world.*

Two of Breslau's most famous artists of the interwar period had little connection to the academy. The first was Eugen Spiro (1874-1972), who studied for just two years in Breslau before continuing his studies in Munich in

1894. He went on to become a leading member of the 'Berlin Secession' movement, alongside fellow Bratislavian Willy Jaeckel. After working as a sketch artist for the General Staff during the First World War, Spiro became a noted portrait painter. Perhaps his most famous sitter was Leni Riefenstahl (b.1902), the former dancer and actress who would later make her name as director of the Nazi propaganda films *Triumph des Willens* ('Triumph of the Will', 1936) and *Olympia* (1938). Spiro emigrated to France in 1935 and, from 1941, spent the remainder of his life in the USA. Count Balthazar Klossowski de Rola, or 'Balthus' (1908-2001), was the other. Self-taught, enigmatic and controversial, Balthus was for some 'the last great painter of the 20th century'. His depictions of pubescent girls brought him fame and notoriety, with one critic noting sourly that 'he is to little girls what Stubbs is to horses'. Nonetheless, his pictures featured in numerous international exhibitions and even graced the private collection of Picasso, who described him as 'a real painter'. On his private life he was deliberately silent. Though Balthus spent his early life in Paris, it has been suggested that he was born in Breslau. The fact that his native tongue was German might seem to support this contention, but the artist himself was less than forthcoming: 'Balthus is a painter about whom nothing is known,' he once said, before adding, 'Now, let us look at the pictures.'

The efforts of two Breslau academics in other fields, Otfried Foerster and Fritz Haber, offer an interesting reflection of Weimar politics. Professor of Neurology in Breslau since 1909, Foerster was called to Moscow in 1922 to advise the team that was treating Lenin. The choice of a German doctor to treat a Soviet leader was an interesting one. It may be seen as an assertion of the 'Rapallo Spirit', whereby the two pariah nations of Europe had resumed relations and had waived reparations.

Haber's postwar activities illustrate Germany's economic frailty. After his controversial Nobel Prize (see above), he set to work on a project which, by extracting gold from sea water, sought to ease Germany's payment of reparations. His seemingly hare-brained scheme - which extended the concept of panning for gold in rivers - involved him in a series of experimental Atlantic crossings by specially adapted liners. In 1928, thoroughly disillusioned, he was forced to conclude that gold-panning in the ocean was not going to fill Fort Knox.

The Bratislavian literary community, which came to the fore after 1918, had strong links with the pre-war period. The leading literary journal, *Der Osten* ('The East'), had been launched in 1902 and became the vehicle of the 'Breslau School of Poets'. The leading personality, Carl Hauptmann (1858-1921), Gerhart's brother, died at the start of the 1920s, but exerted a strong influence on younger writers. Among the latter was Walter Meckauer (1889-1965), whose

debut with *Die Bergschmiede* (1916) dealt with the themes of Silesian nature and *Heimat* popularised earlier by Gerhart Hauptmann. His *Josche zieht ins Feld* (1931) revealed sympathies for the Russian Revolution. Two other writers stand out, both inspired by sentimental 'Silesianism'. Will-Erich Peuckert (1895-1969) was an ethnographer, whose *Schlesischer Volkskunde* (1928) was a standard work. His novel *Luntross* (1924) was written in the same cosy spirit. Paul Keller (1873-1932), who edited the monthly *Die Bergstadt*, was one of the most successful writers in Germany. His early novel, *Waldwinter* (1902), treated the subject of the flight to nature by modern city dwellers. His entertaining *Drei Brüder suchen das Glück* (1929) closed a career in which he had sold five million books. His grave in Breslau survives.

Breslau's formidable musical establishment continued to attract some of the biggest names. Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) had met both triumph and disaster in Breslau - disaster with the ill-received IV Symphony in 1903 and triumph with his presentation of the V Symphony (1905) and III Symphony (1906). But the strong Mahlerian tradition was upheld after the composer's death by the chief conductor of the Breslau Orchestra, Georg Dohrn, who worked in the city for more than thirty years up to 1933. Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-19 54), whose career had started as a reserve conductor in 1905—6, returned on numerous occasions between 1925 and 1940 with his Berlin Philharmonic. Richard Strauss (1864-1949), whose opera *Salome* had been premiered in Breslau in 1906, reappeared frequently both as a conductor and accompanist until the mid-1930s.

Yet the halcyon days of Weimar were to be short-lived. The advent of the Third Reich subjected all aspects of academic and cultural life to severe strictures. The effect on the art world was immediate. The Führer's tastes did not match those of the Breslau Academy. Wholesale academic dismissals preceded a Nazi offensive against art, which culminated in the confiscations of October 1936, when the Breslauer Otto Mueller had the honour of being Put on the same 'degenerate' list as Kokoschka, Picasso and Van Gogh. The resultant Munich 'Exhibition of Degenerate Art' attracted some two million visitors and was the most popular exhibition ever staged in the Third Reich.<sup>58</sup> The fate of 'degenerate' artists was rather more serious. Those who remained in Germany faced escalating penalties. Most, like Schlemmer, had to survive as best they could. He was removed from the Breslau Academy in 1933, and all his works were removed from German galleries. One of the leading artists of his day was thus reduced to camouflaging the municipal gasometer in Stuttgart. It is said that he died in 1943 from 'grief at not being allowed to paint'.

Once the staff were suitably tamed, academic life could be bent more energetically to the purposes of the Nazi regime. In 1939, for example, a group of Breslau academics was commissioned to examine the historical

preconditions for 'large-scale settlement policy in the eastern territories'. It included the Professor of German Folklore, Walter Kuhn (1903-83). Born in Bielitz (Bielsko-Biala), Kuhn was a specialist on the German linguistic enclaves of eastern Poland and was involved as an adviser in the resettlement of the Volhynian Germans. He was to become one of the leading lights of *Ostforschung* or 'Eastern research'.

Other projects followed. After the September campaign, a number of professors were engaged by the Ministry of Education to supply 'proof that the Polish areas annexed to the Reich were culturally German. Three scholars from Breslau were selected: the art historian Dagobert Frey, and the prehistorians Ernst Petersen and Martin Jahn. Frey delivered his first contribution in 1941: a lavishly illustrated book on the city of Krakau'. In it, he contrived to avoid all mention of the Jewish community, which had made up about one-quarter of the pre-war population and had been extremely influential in its cultural history. He also refused to identify the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Poland as a Polish city. The following year, he published a guide to Lublin, which showed a similar degree of objectivity.<sup>61</sup> Breslau University itself was given a broader task to fulfil. In a speech in November 1941, the President of the German Academy outlined the demands of German culture:

*[In order for us] to possess a space ... it must be won spiritually. [To this end] the Reich University in Posen, together with the old eastern universities in Königsberg and Breslau shall form a consolidated Eastwall of German spirit which shall forever watch and prevent any Slav inroads.*

Anthropology was an academic discipline that lent itself to the ideological requirements of the times. The 'Breslau School' had been established in 1929, when Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt was appointed Professor of Anthropology and launched a number of overseas expeditions. His work to establish a typology of racial and behavioural characteristics culminated in *Die rassischen Grundlagen des deutschen Volkstums* ('The racial basis of Germanity, 1934), which identified five 'germanic races' - Nordic, Dinaric, Mediterranean, Alpine and East Baltic. Supported by collaborators such as Use Schwidetzsky, the school became a leading centre for the study of Nazi theories of race, so beloved by the likes of Heinrich Himmler. Surprisingly perhaps, it was to survive the death of its Nazi sponsors, publishing journals such as *The Mankind Quarterly* and turning itself into a scientific base for modern, right-wing race theories.

After 1933 literature became intensely political. An established figure like Professor Paul Merker (1881-1945), who had the chair of Modern Literature in Breslau, held on by specialising in Renaissance studies and by maintaining a bland, apolitical facade. But many succumbed to the pressure for nationalistic

and locally patriotic writing. Hans-Christoph Kaergel (1889-1946), for example, followed an early work called *Volke ohne Heimal* (1922), with a later one called *Hockewanzel* (1933), which was openly contemptuous of Poles and Czechs. As editor of an anthology of German Silesian verse, he qualified to be chosen in 1940 as the *Landesleiter*, in effect the wartime dictator, of the provincial Literary Board. Gerhart Pohl (1902-66) wrote plays and novels on subjects such as the Waldenburg (Walbrzych) coal basin and the romance of the Silesian railways. Wolfgang Schwarz, whose first collection of poems was entitled *Das neue Lied der Heimat* (1941), was an officer in Germany's Cossack Brigade. Others paid heavily for their views. Walter Steinberg (1913-92) was a Communist writer, who spent three years in Kletschkau Prison, having been handed over to the Nazi authorities by the USSR. Arthur Silbergleit (1881-1941) was a Catholic priest of Jewish descent, who died in Auschwitz.

Emil Ludwig (1881-1948) was one intellectual who refused to compromise. The son of the Breslau eye specialist Hermann Cohn, he trained as a lawyer before gaining international fame in the 1920s with his biographies of, among others, Goethe, Napoleon and Bismarck. He was forced into exile in Switzerland in 1932 and subsequently to the US, where he became an adviser to President Roosevelt, whose biography he also wrote. His highly readable books were very diverse: *Three Titans* (1930) on Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Beethoven; *The Nile: Lifeportrait of a river* (1936), and his autobiographical *Geschenke des Lebens* (1931). His hatred of the Nazi regime was expressed in numerous bitterly anti-Fascist pamphlets for the American authorities. In his 'How to treat the Germans' (1943), he expounded on the arrogance, brutality and intolerance of his compatriots:

*The Germans do not even have a word for 'fair', just as they have no word for 'gentleman'. Both of these words were incorporated into the rich German language in their English forms. The Germans, trained to be soldiers, lack the Anglo-Saxon sportive spirit and joy in games; they are a nation without hobbies.*

Ludwig never returned to Breslau after 1932. But his memories of the district of his youth were not bitter ones:

*The Stadtgraben [the old moat] was a quiet spot. Thirty houses stood there; some were villas with gardens, others were arranged as flats for letting but had been for decades in the hands of the same old families . . . It was a sort of aristocratic Corso, along which the carriages of the rich would drive now and then . . . Once the walls had been destroyed and peace nominally established ... a comfortable commercial town had taken the place of the truculent fortress, and all seemed quiet on the hillside; rarely was music to be heard there, and even the moat, broad as a river and bordered with the green of drooping willows and dense*

*alder trees, was never enlivened by a passing boat, its character being more fitly indicated by the presence of a few swans.*

The interwar period in Germany was notable for the advent of mass culture. In Breslau, as elsewhere, cinema, radio and, of course, sport, grew in popularity. Weimar presided over the revolution in cinema - the era of Fritz Lang, G.W. Pabst and Kristina Soderbaum. It brought a spate of innovative building including the Deli Cinema of 1926, designed by Hans Poelzig. By 1939, Breslau possessed thirty-seven cinemas, of which only ten survived the war. Radio, too, was the product of technological advance, becoming another staple of cultural life. Breslau's radio tower (1925) and Berlin's Haus des Rundfunks (1930) were both designed by Poelzig. From then on, 'Breslau' was to figure on radio dials throughout the world, as one of the most powerful radio stations in Europe.

Cycling and football were the most popular pursuits of interwar Breslau. Based on the track at Gröneiche and, later, at Lillienthal, cycling numbered some twenty-four clubs by 1939 and many stars, such as Richard Scheuermann and the Heidenreich brothers. Its popularity was exceeded only by that of football. Yet Breslau enjoyed two fairly glory-free decades in the German League. Its leading clubs, *Schlesien Breslau*, *SC Breslau 08* and *Sportfreunde Breslau*, never managed to reach a final of the German Cup or Championship competition and won no silverware. The closest they came was in two semi-final appearances, one for *Sportfreunde Breslau* in 1920, and one for *SC Breslau 08* in 1929. There was more success on the international stage. Five football internationals were played in Breslau, where the German national team remained unbeaten with two draws and three victories. One of those victories, in May 1937, was a monumental 8-0 thrashing of Denmark. The team - Jakob, Janes, Münzenberg, Kupfer, Goldbrunner, Kitzinger, Lehner, Gellesch, Siffling, Szepan and Urban - went on to win the following ten games. They came to be known as the 'Breslau Eleven'.

The highlight of the interwar sporting record, however, must undoubtedly be found in the XIth *Deutsche Turn und Sportfest*, or German Sports Festival, held in Breslau in July 1938. In the presence of the Führer, the athletes and sportsmen and sportswomen of the Reich competed in all imaginable disciplines before a total audience of some 6001,000 spread over nine days. Hitler's appearance in Breslau was later described by a teenager who saw his Führer for the one and only time in his life. As; he later recalled with some embarrassment, Hitler was treated with the reverence due to a God':

*It was a Sunday of sunshine, benefiting from what Germans at the time called Führerwetter. The Sports and Gymnastics Festival had brought thousands of visitors into*



Breslau from all over the leich .... At the time, Hitler had reached the peak of popularity. Even the most determined critics admitted that in a free referendum he would have won 80% support. The Sudeten Crisis had already begun, and week by week, the pressure on Czechoslovakia was being tightened . . . Yet there was no thought of a new war, which Germans, especially in the East, feared like the plague.

That day, I was carrying a flag of the German youth movement, and was standing somewhat at an angle to the Führer's rostrum, at the opposite side of the open space where he was reviewing the march-past of the gymnastic groups. From a distance of about a hundred metres, I could see him very well and I never took my eye off him. (Obviously, we were all overexcited; around us, tension, anticipation and joy reigned. A band was playing marching music and heated up the atmosphere.

Suddenly, a far-off noise was heard coming from the streets near the square. It got louder and louder, until it seemed like a hurricane ... It approached us in a rising wave, reaching skywards and ready to sweep us away. I've never since experienced such a sensation, simultaneously terrified and fascinated. Seeking support, I latched onto a heavy pole from which a black flag with a lightning sign was waving. I turned towards the noise with a tense look. But I also noticed that the bodyguard was standing at their posts with stoical ease. These were the Führer's bodyguard from the SS Adolf Hitler, gigantic men over two metres tall wearing black uniforms and black steel helmets. They surrounded the rostrum, and, at the sign from an officer, closed ranks . . .

Then it happened. A marching column of six rows emerged from the Schweidnitzerstrasse, all dressed alike in grey suit and Tyrolean hats. They were the front of the huge delegation from the Sudeten Gymnastic Association in Czechoslovakia. It was the crowning point of the march - past, and a propaganda performance carefully thought out by the manipulators of Goebbels' ministry (as I later realised) . . .

When the flag-bedecked head of the procession came level with the Führer, he stepped forward, stood at the edge of the balustrade, raised his right arm, and greeted the Sudeten Germans' banners ... At that moment, I felt as if the whole Schlossplatz and the thousands of spectators would explode like a colossal bomb. The roar of enchantment became unbearable.

... Of course, I was screaming like everyone else with all my strength. The wonderment carried me away. Apart from that, one can't escape from mass hysteria. I myself wanted to participate, to be at one with that wonderful company.

Suddenly, one could distinguish a new sound amidst the shouting, a sharp staccato whose meaning I could not immediately grasp. The words passed from mouth to mouth until finally in an ever more insistent rhythm they were voiced by the whole crowd, as if by one enormous throat: Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer (One People, One State, One Leader). And then, once again, drowning itself in a hypnotic emotion of unlimited power.

It took people out of their daily routine, away from their humdrum existence, from their isolation. It gave them a convincing sense of belonging to a magnificent whole, a feeling of

victory and strength. For a few brief moments, it promised the unattainable, a glimpse of immortality . . .

Girls and young women, dressed in folk costume, were the first to advance on the Führer's stand, pushing aside the giant SS-men, who clearly had orders not to intervene. Hitler leaned over the barrier and, smiling, shook the hands stretched out to him. Women wept with joy.

Hitler's private photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, was circling around. He had a monopoly on the Führer's official pictures, and made a fortune from them ... 35 years later, when I was doing research in the photographic archives in Washington and London, those shots taken that day in Breslau in 1938 were still there . . .

Hitler aimed to make German youth as 'tough as leather, as swift as whippets and as hard as Krupp steel', and thereby prove the superiority of the Aryan race. In this regard, one is reminded of the old Polish joke: 'as slim as Göring, as tall as Goebbels, and as blond as Hitler'.

Breslau's Polish culture slipped steadily downhill between 1918 and 1945. It enjoyed the backing neither of the Church hierarchy nor of the state. In the 1920s, paradoxically, it suffered from the re-establishment of an independent Poland. The proliferation of Polish institutions in nearby Poznań, from the creation of the Adam Mickiewicz University to the expansion of a Polish cultural infrastructure of theatres, schools, libraries, bookshops and societies, attracted many people who before 1918 might have been drawn to Breslau. After 1933, under Nazi rule, the picture of decline faded into one of terminal crisis. An early signal was emitted when a group of students at the university was set upon by stormtroopers and severely thrashed, simply for speaking Polish. Since Nazi ideology put the Poles into the category of *Untermenschen*, it followed that no case existed for preserving - let alone for respecting — Polish language, literature, art or history. Such things, quite officially, were declared to be inferior. The Nazis had far more radical plans than the old *Hakatists* (see above), but they put the *Hakatist* programme into effect.

The postwar *Encyclopaedia of Wrocław* (2000) lists no single Polish writer who was active in Breslau in the 1920s and 1930s. The only Polish books to be published for local consumption were devotional booklets and newsletters issued by the diocesan office. There was no Polish bookshop. All Polish students were expelled from the University of Breslau in 1939. A resolution passed in the Aula Leopoldina declared, 'We are profoundly convinced that no Polish foot will ever cross the threshold of this German University again.'

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Between 1918 and 1945, Breslau's 'Germanity' was manifested with unequalled intensity. Not only did Germans represent an overwhelming

numerical majority, but they were in the grip of an ugly public mood, where all signs of otherness at the very least provoked frowns and, at the worst, blows. Both in the 1920s (in the days of the hyperinflation, the *Freikorps* and the Upper Silesian Risings) and even more so in the 1930s (the days of mass unemployment, street warfare and Nazi gangsterism) it was very uncomfortable not to be a German. Discrimination increased. The ethnic minorities dwindled, and by 1939 had been virtually eliminated. The Poles were made well aware of the danger early on. The Jews, who were very largely German by language and culture, could have little inkling of the virulent hostility brewing against them.

The Polish community in Breslau dropped from a meagre 4-5,000 in 1918 to a statistically insignificant residue two decades later. After the First World War, Polish Masses were resumed in St Ann's Church, and from 1921 in St Martin's. A Polish Consulate was opened on the Main Square, and a tiny Polish school was established by a devoted teacher, Helena Adamczewska. But the omens were not favourable. The creation of the Polish Republic drew off most of the educated people who might have given communal leadership. On 26 August 1920, a German mob broke away from a plebiscite meeting to demolish both the Polish Consulate and the Polish School. The Polish Library was burned to the ground, together with several thousand books.

Matters improved briefly in the mid-1920s, and the Polish Consulate, School and Library reopened. The Union of Poles in Germany (ZPN), whose membership was strongest in Berlin and on the Ruhr, launched a branch in Breslau. A minuscule Polish People's Party won a total of 250 votes in the election of 1924. A 'Polish House' was established in 1928 on the Heinrichstrasse as a focus for cultural and educational activities. A Polish scout troop was formed. And the Polish 'Harmonia' Choral Society supported three choirs. But the numbers simply did not match the dedication of the activists. And the onset of mass unemployment cut Breslau off from the traditional stream of work-seekers from its Polish hinterland. All hopes for a lasting Polish revival in Breslau were dashed after 1933. What is more, the advent of the Nazis coincided with a marked influx of students from the Polish districts of German Upper Silesia, who were no longer permitted to study in Poland. A clash was therefore inevitable. The creation of a Polish Student Union in 1933 came at the very time when the Gestapo was beginning to investigate Polish students as an undesirable element. During the compulsory registration of all students by the police, Poles and Jews were issued with the same distinctive yellow identity cards. Polish students were later able to exchange their yellow cards for standard brown ones marked *Polnische Minderheit*, or 'Polish minority'. But then the restrictions began. In 1937, all Polish scout and student uniforms were banned. In 1938, the Polish House

was ransacked by the police, and all activities ceased. In March 1939, a last defiant and illegal parade was held under the banner of *Wiara Ojcow*, 'the Faith of our Fathers'. Community leaders were arrested, and casually sent to the concentration camps. In the first half of 1939, while emigration was still possible, many of the remaining Polish families in Breslau simply packed their bags and left for Poland. The very last Polish Mass in German Breslau was celebrated in St Martin's Church on 17 September 1939, the day of the Soviet invasion of Poland. Polishness appeared to have been eliminated for good.

The attacks on Breslau's Jewry passed through similar stages. A curious sign of the changing times was seen in the local Breslau branch of the *Alpenverein*. In 1881, the branch had voted to exclude members who wanted to keep out the Jews. In 1921, it voted to exclude the Jews. The initial violence of the immediate postwar years blew over, but it returned in the 1930s with a vengeance. In 1933-5, anti-Jewish discrimination was patchy and disorganised. After the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, it became thorough and systematic. In 1938-9, after *Reichskristallnacht*, it was unrestrained and life-threatening. But it could not yet be described as exterminatory.

After 1918, a sea-change occurred in attitudes towards Breslau's Jewish community. New groups, such as the German Freedom Party, were established with explicitly anti-Semitic programmes. The Kapp putsch of 1920 provided the first victims (see above). Later that year, a Jewish-owned store and a hotel housing *Ostjuden* were attacked by a mob. In July 1923, a demonstration against inflation and unemployment turned into a riot that blamed the Jews for the nation's ills. The success story of Wilhelmine assimilation was evaporating.

Nonetheless, for many Breslau Jews life continued much as before. An elementary school was founded in 1921 and a secondary school two years later. A home for the aged and a youth institute were opened in 1930. The younger generation of Jews saw anti-Semitism as incomprehensible. Their parents prayed that it would be a passing phase.

Fewer than half of Breslau's highly assimilated Jews practised their former religion. Most of them did not even think of themselves as Jewish. The son of such a family, which had returned to Breslau after spending the war years abroad, recalled the 1920s:

*It was the Germany of the Weimar Republic. I remember being shifted from the bedroom to the hall one night during the week of the Kapp Putsch, when machine-gun bullets came through the window of our suburban apartment ... I remember being sent shopping with bread ration stamps. I remember discussing the latest dollar rate with other boys during the great inflation. I remember the presidential elections of 1925 when General Hindenburg, the war hero already nearing his dotage, defeated the candidates of the disunited left and centre.*

*Politics did not occupy centre stage at home. My father was a scientist, proud of being a*

*citizen of the free city of Hamburg . . . and consciously anglophile. He was much less nationalistic than most of his academic colleagues but shared their class prejudices . . . He rejected socialism on freetrade grounds, and the Social Democrats as the party of the uneducated. My mother was completely unpolitical. Beautiful, determined and out to enjoy life . . . she left my father to marry an old Prussian nobleman when I was 12 . . .*

*Three of my four grandparents were Jewish by descent though no longer by religion . . . But of all this Jewish background we were as children barely aware. It did not affect our lives in any way . . . except that we enjoyed occasional holidays with our rich Polish uncle . . . Both my parents were Protestants, and I was baptised and confirmed in the Lutheran Church. But this, too, was a matter of social convention . . .*

*My last three years of secondary school were also the last three years of the Weimar Republic. Politics became inescapable . . . One after the other my classmates at school joined the Nazi organisations. I increasingly attached myself to the small band of active anti-Nazis in the class, one of whom was an artistically gifted boy who called himself a socialist. Another became a clergyman ... and briefly succeeded Willy Brandt as Burgmeister of Berlin. A third [became] conductor of the opera at Bremerhaven. We sat for our leaving exam in January 1933, and went off with our headmaster on the traditional [top] form skiing tour. When we got back, the Third Reich had broken out. . .*

The advent of Hitler's chancellorship made the threat to German Jewry more explicit. Two Breslau diarists, Walter Tausk (1890-1941) and Willy Cohn (1888-1941), bore witness to the growing persecution. The former, who was an ex-soldier and a convert to Buddhism, chronicled Jewish life between 1933 and 1940. Cohn's diaries document the terminal phase in 1941.

To begin with, Tausk was reasonably positive. He noted as late as 1935 that there was 'no anti-Semitism in Breslau', talking instead of 'rather an openly expressed hatred of this [Nazi] government'.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to say whether he was poorly informed or simply hoping against hope. For the Nazis were not biding their time passively. They were not ready for the mass violence that would break out shortly. But they were constantly spreading the threats and the smears. Julius Streicher's paper, *Der Stürmer*, for instance, published a long series of articles in 1934, each exposing the alleged misdeeds of Jews in a given German city. One week's article was devoted to Breslau, where, it was said, Jews practised the ritual murder of German children.

Very few people, in fact, knew what was really happening in Germany. Yet, as would be revealed only many decades later, the Nazis were secretly arming themselves with the means to give practical application to their racial theories. In particular, they wanted to find ways of identifying lines of Jewish descent in the population, irrespective of whether or not the individuals concerned were aware of their genealogy. To this end, the Nazis desperately needed two things which, on gaining power, they had not possessed. Firstly, they needed

automated machines that were capable of extracting and cross-referencing detailed genealogical information from millions and millions of census returns. Secondly, they needed skilled demographers, who could develop the requisite techniques. The machinery was supplied by the American firm of IBM, whose 'punch-card system' was ideally suited for the purpose and whose German subsidiary, Dehomag, signed a contract on 8 January 1934 for manufacturing the system under licence in Germany. The demographers were found by trial and error:

*On July 2 1936, several Nazis met in a Breslau inn to discuss the services of Fritz Arlt, a Leipzig statistician. Arlt had created a cross-referenced card file on every Leipzig Jewish resident, down to the so-called quarter Jews. What made Arlt's expertise desirable was that his cards also listed which ancestral Polish towns their families originated from. At the Breslau meeting, Arlt was assigned to work with the security offices of the [SS] Auslandsorganisation. His groundbreaking Polish demography was deemed so pivotal, [he] was asked to journey to Berlin to assist Eichmann's Referat II, 112, with expenses to be paid by the SD.*

In retrospect, one can see that this step was absolutely critical in the Nazi preparations for their campaign of genocide against the Jews. It gave them the confidence not only to identify the racial profile of every Jew in Germany, but to extend their information base to Europe's main reservoir of Jewish settlement in Poland. The concept of Germany's eastern *Lebensraum* moved from the realm of vague rhetoric to that of practical implementation. In due course, Arlt was destined to head the 'Population and Welfare Administration' (*sic*) of the wartime General Government.

Once the Nuremberg Laws were instituted, therefore, the predicament of the prospective victims deteriorated overnight. The Nuremberg Laws, and their application, require some explanation. There were two main decrees: one was the *Reichsbürgergesetz*, or 'Citizenship law'; the other was the *Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*, or 'The defence of German blood and German honour'. Every single person in Germany had to submit an application to the police and was then issued with an identity card, which had to be carried at all times. 'Aryan citizens' received brown cards. Jewish non-citizens, and various other categories, received yellow cards to make them instantly recognisable on inspection of their documents. From then on, discrimination was formalised and legalised. In the previous phase, as happened in Breslau, Jews lost their jobs as lawyers or doctors when Nazi thugs simply appeared in their offices and threw them out. But they could often find alternative employment or even return discreetly to their posts once

the thugs had left. After 1935, no such ruses were possible. So-called 'Aryans' were themselves liable to prosecution if they broke the law, either by allowing Jews to work in forbidden categories of employment or by engaging with a Jewish person in sexual relations. The definition of Jewishness was exclusively determined by biological kinship.

At a stroke, therefore, Germany's Jews were disenfranchised, driven from the professions and from public office and stripped of their nationality. All relations between Jews and non-Jews were forbidden. In Breslau, six women were sent to the concentration camps for the new crime of *Rassenschande*, or 'Racial disgrace'. By 1939, all Jews had to adopt the names 'Israel' for men and 'Sara' for women. Their passports were marked with the red letter 'J'. If they applied to emigrate, their property was confiscated. There was no point protesting that one did not regard oneself as Jewish.

*Reichskristallnacht* proved a further turning point. The wave of mayhem, engineered by Goebbels, was supposed to be a popular response to the assassination, by a Jewish youth, of the German Ambassador in Paris. Nationwide, it cost ninety-one lives. Thousands of Jewish businesses, apartments and synagogues were looted and destroyed; 30,000 persons were arrested and many committed suicide. One eye-witness in Breslau was the fourteen-year-old John Najmann:

*That morning I left for school as usual. As I walked out of our building I saw my teacher rushing along with his hat pulled down and his collar up. I spoke to him but he whispered to me to go away, to leave him alone. 'There will be no school today,' he said. I continued on my way, past the small department store. All its windows were smashed, and German storm-troopers were throwing clothing and household goods from the upper floors onto the street. Police holding hands formed a cordon to stop the crowd being hit by the flying objects. When the store had been emptied of stock, the police stepped back and the spectators took armfuls from the huge pile. I saw a tram pass and the conductor and passengers got off to help themselves to whatever they could carry ... I walked on and passed the prayer rooms where my family worshipped on the ground floor of a block of flats. The scrolls of our Torah had been taken out, dumped on the pavement and were burning there. I went back later and stuffed my pockets with the ashes and charred scraps ... When I got home ... my mother and I wept. It was the first time I had seen her cry.*

One Breslauer who escaped the horrors of *Reichskristallnacht* was Dr Alfons Lasker, father of the famed cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. He was spared through the bravery of his Gentile friend, Walter Mehne:

*Mehne ... was not a Jew, and he deliberately ignored the fact that the streets were crawling with members of the Gestapo looking for Jews. He climbed the stairs to our flat,*

*took my father with him, and drove him around the town in his car for the rest of the day ... The courage of a man like Mehne is all the more noteworthy since he was a well-known figure in Breslau. His premises were situated on the first floor of a building on the Taubentzen Platz, right in the centre of the town ... The Mehnes were steadfast in their refusal to hang up a picture of Hitler ... they also refused to hang out a swastika on the various 'flag days'. It made them instantly suspect. But they did not yield an inch. They disapproved of what was happening and were not afraid to show it. Both father and son conducted themselves in a manner which can only be called exemplary.'*

Walter Tausk's recollections of *Kristallnacht* make harrowing reading. He noted that the mayhem 'was only stopped with a lot of effort. It had already degenerated into the looting of flats, strangulation, lynchings and manslaughter.' Later that year he wrote, 'those arrested go to Buchenwald, where the majority of the arrested Jews from Breslau are ... or rather, were'. His account was confirmed by a man called Rosten, who was one of around 3,000 Jewish males from Breslau, from a total of some 10,000, who were sent to Buchenwald in the so-called 'November Action'. After weeks of maltreatment, in which an average of thirty inmates died daily, he was released because he was a First World War veteran and had promised to start emigration proceedings. By the end of 1938, two-thirds of Breslau's 30,000 Jews had left.

The exodus of Breslau's Jews took place in three or four distinct phases, each phase being less voluntary than the preceding one. In the first wave, people who saw the implications of Hitler's rise to power, and who had good contacts abroad, were free to board a train and go. In the course of 1933, between 2,000 and 3,000 people took this opportunity:

*My father had been dismissed from his chair at Breslau University under the 'Aryan Laws' and had been invited to a research appointment at Oxford. Together with his second wife and my younger sister, he moved to Oxford in August, and I followed six weeks later. On October 10 1933, I crossed the Channel from Calais to Dover and travelled straight through to Oxford. The next morning, the Rector of Lincoln College inducted me into the college; and the Vice-chancellor performed the matriculation ceremony in the Divinity School. I was distressed by my inability to understand a word he was saying. It was only sometime later [I learned] it had been Latin ... ,*

Another curious case came to light after the war, when a lady briefly returned to Breslau to see if her house had survived. According to a man who met her then, she had been the Jewish wife of a German engineer who wanted to join the Nazi Party. Since Nazi Party members were forbidden to have Jewish spouses, the husband took his wife by train to the Swiss border, waved her goodbye, and returned to Breslau. She survived. He did not. In the second wave, which began after the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws, would-

be emigrants faced much greater difficulties. For one thing, they had usually lost their main source of income. They were often forced to sell their assets at knock-down prices in order to cover the costs of emigration, and every step of the proceedings was closely watched by the Gestapo. Max Silberberg, for instance, had been co-owner of the Weissenberg Company in Breslau, which produced magnesite for the steel industry. He was also the founder of the priceless private art collection that bore his name. In 1934, after his company had been forcibly 'Aryanised' without compensation, he decided to sell his pictures. He entrusted them to a Jewish auctioneer, Paul Graupe, who was still in business and who placed them, in 1935, in a run of four auctions, duly marked as 'non-Aryan property'. Van Gogh's *L'Olivette* was bought by the National Gallery in Berlin. A Cezanne found its way to the Hermitage in Leningrad. And Pissarro's *Boulevard Montmartre, Printemps* disappeared into the art market, to surface in 1997. Graupe then left safely for New York. Silberberg's son, Alfred, and his daughter-in-law, Gerta, fled to Britain. Silberberg himself was held in a concentration camp from which he was never released.

In May 1938, the eighteen-year-old Walter Laqueur had just completed his secondary schooling and was preparing to study abroad:

*I had just finished school and my future lay in the hands of various committees, organisations and consulates. I had a lot of free time and went almost every morning to the Sudpark. I remember I read Celine's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* there. I don't know what it was that fascinated me about this story of cynicism and desperation, perhaps I had an inkling that another journey to the end of the night was about to begin. Or is it wrong to attribute the gift of prophecy to an 18-year-old? I remember how I met a former teacher of mine on one of those mornings. He was not a Nazi. He had been forced to retire early. He was deeply pessimistic about the future and advised me most strongly to leave the country as soon as possible. He spoke of the hard times to come, and that he envied me the opportunity to get out. Finally he asked that I should return when the worst was over. Then he bade me farewell, but suddenly appeared to remember something and said: 'You know that I tried, not always with success, to explain the *Niebelungenlied* to you? Have another look at the story of Hagen.'*

*That was the last time that I saw Dr U., as he left the park with his ebony walking stick. There is no trace of him, no less of the other teachers. I looked at the story of Hagen, but I'm not sure what he meant. Perhaps it was Hagen's last words, before his final battle, [where he says that] everything had turned out as he had predicted (. . . es ist auch so ergangen, wie ich mir hatte gedacht). For a while, I was fascinated by another part of the *Niebelungenlied*: As Hagen is on the way to the court of Attila, he crosses the Danube with King Gunther's escort. There, a group of nymphs prophesy that they will all be killed, with the sole exception of the priest. Hagen laughs and pushes the clergyman into the swollen river to punish the*

*nymphs for their lies. But the priest is swept to the opposite bank, whilst Hagen and his companions are killed in a battle, which they had brought upon themselves.*

In the third wave, which began amid the panic of *Reichskristallnacht*, thousands of Breslau Jews, who had previously opposed emigration, fled in terror, in imminent fear of their lives. One family's story must suffice:

*We lived in a small town called Strehlen, a town of about 15,000 people about 20 miles south of Breslau . . . We were quite well to do . . . My great-great-grandfather had come to the town as a peddler in the early 1800s. He became wealthy and the money stayed in the family . . . My parents had a brick factory and a farm. We lived in a 200-year-old farmhouse.*

*It was 1936 when I can remember the first incidents of anti-Semitism. As a youngster, I didn't really believe it. There was a boy from my class that was not allowed to come and see me any more. He had to join the Jungvolk, the Hitler Youth . . .*

*In 1938, it became nasty . . . Crystal Night was November 9th 1938 . . . They hit us at about 6.00 in the morning, black shirts, stormtroopers . . . they sent the stormtroopers from Strehlen to another little town ... so the home boys would not be inhibited. They came just before dawn . . . They took my mother and father out of bed, left us children alone with grandmother ... Of course, we were terribly upset ... All the three of us boys could hear was the noise of breaking glass, of turning over furniture and breaking things. About 7.30 or 8.00, I ran downstairs and asked one of the men 'When are my parents coming back?' And he said 'Geb' raufoder ich gebe dir 'ne OhrfeigeP ('Get upstairs or I'll give you a smack') . . . [But] then they went to the next Jewish home. We were the first ones to be hit, lucky because they became drunk later.*

*They took our car with them. We went downstairs and saw that the ground floor was completely demolished. Every window was broken . . . They had taken a knife through every picture . . . though we had some pictures of Frederick the Great. They didn't touch those . . .*

*That same afternoon ... an honest policeman came and took my father away. He told my father: 'Mr Stargardter, I suggest you take a lot of money . . . you may be gone for a long time.' He was part of the establishment, not Gestapo. My father did take a lot of money. Turns out he stayed for about 10 weeks in Buchenwald . . . Later that day, the stormtroopers vandalised the synagogue and poured cow urine all over the Torah and inside the building. It was not burned however. As a matter of fact there was no burning in Strehlen.*

*The people in Strehlen, the day after the house had been vandalised [everyone] came to look at the house, like looking at a car accident . . . Most just shook their heads and said 'My God, what has happened here?' There were a very few who shook their fists and yelled 'Damned Jews!' or something. [But] most people were completely indifferent or they were afraid to say anything . . . They didn't have enough guts to stand up and say 'This is wrong' . . .*

*[My father] told us that when they were admitted into the camp, they walked through a line of attendants or whatever those animals were . . . and they were hit with sticks . . . [Yet] the worst thing that happened to him is that ... he got scarlet fever ... He came back after 9 or 10 weeks because he had been decorated as a soldier in World War One with the Iron Cross. In those days, it was a reason for letting Jews out of concentration camps; I don't think it lasted long.*

*My mother at that time was in the process of selling the properties . . . We were required to sell everything within a certain amount of time. It was November 1938 . . . and we stayed another 6 months or so . . . We could travel anywhere as far as I know . . . There was no requirement for permits; there weren't any badges. Some stores and restaurants had signs 'Jews stay out'. We left [Strehlen] two months before the war. I wasn't there for the worst. . .*

*I remember my father saying 'They're not going to touch us. The government is doing business with us.' The brick factories were selling bricks to the German Air Force to make underground hangars. They weren't going to touch us. That was the attitude. And, of course, the people who waited the longest never got out. . .*

*Mother lived through all this and I don't really think that she was bitter. She was more German than Jewish right to her death in 1981. [Indeed] two of her best friends were Germans . . . Tante Anita was a German woman in Strehlen, an employee of the German Railroad. She came to our house the day we left, even though she had been threatened that she could lose her job . . .*

*We were forced to sell our property, and in August 1939 my parents, my grandmother, my two brothers and I left Germany on a German ship, with something like \$10.00 apiece . . . The final sale of our properties was conducted by an uncle after we left. In 1940, he wrote a letter to Guatemala stating that he had managed to send a large sum of money to a bank in Switzerland. In spite of many efforts to retrieve it, the money is still there.*

Of course, these were the lucky ones. They lived to write their memoirs. They had money, and diamonds to hide in their baggage. They had relatives abroad. Their experiences cannot fairly be compared either to the mass atrocities that were already taking place in the Soviet Union or to the genocide that the Nazis were to perpetrate in the coming years.

In the final wave of departures, which took place under the shadow of war in 1939, a prominent episode was that of the *Kindertransporte*. Jewish parents, who could not leave themselves, made arrangements to send their children to freedom. They were helped by foreign charities, which undertook to organise the trains and take care of their charges. Altogether some 10,000 children were saved. From Breslau, they often went to Prague, where refugee camps had operated for several years, and thence to Switzerland, France or Britain. They were permitted to leave Germany on payment of a bond that they would not return. They were loaded on to trains, often in the dead of night and with very few possessions. One such train left the Hauptbahnhof in

Breslau in late July 1939. On it was nine-year-old Ella Feldmann:

*I had already said good-bye to my father and was standing at the window of the train, which was just about to leave. Suddenly the door was flung open by a woman with tears streaming down her face. With her were two toddlers, a boy and a girl screaming and howling. She just managed to ask me my name, and to [have me] promise her to look after them, when the guards blew the whistle and the train pulled out.*

The stowaways were four-year-old twins: Hanna and Jochi Najmann. They had been too young to qualify for the *Kindertransport*, but, in desperation their mother had pushed through the lines and thrust them into the carriage. From then on, they were on their own.

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Breslau's municipal politics mirrored the trends of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, passing through successive phases of imperial collapse, democracy, stagnation and Fascist extremism. Breslau was exceptional, however, in its enthusiasm for the revolution of 1918. As Paul Lobe noted, the fall of the Kaiser was greeted in Breslau with celebrations and a large measure of popular support. Universal suffrage was introduced for communal elections and the city's *Volksrat* governed from the start with a firm consensus.

To begin with, many things continued in the pre-war vein. The Social Democrats maintained their majority and held a commanding share of municipal offices in the early years. However, the new political forces were not slow to show themselves. The left liberals, who had dominated the city's municipal politics, fell victim to the widespread popular disenchantment with democratic politics. By 1924, they numbered just four seats in the City Council. On the right, new nationalistic and anti-Semitic parties proliferated. One of them was the *Deutscher Bismarckbund*, founded in Breslau by Wilhelm Kube (1887-1943). A former journalist, Kube was prominent among the right-wing splinter groups of German politics. After joining the Nazi Party in 1927, he enjoyed his greatest political success before being assassinated by partisans in 1943 (see above).

On the left, the Communist movement took similar flight. In 1919-24, it grew from a fringe group with sixty members in Breslau to a mass party many thousands strong. It drew strength from a merger with the Independent Socialist Party (USPD), who were by far the stronger partner. Its press organ was the *Schlesische Arbeiter Zeitung*. In 1924-5, it was delegalised and its local secretary, A. Oelsner, imprisoned. But it revived in good time to enter with gusto the street-fighting of 1929-33 and, in the early stages, to confront the

Nazis on more than equal terms. Its local activists included Alfred Hamann (1882-?), who was exposed as a police informer; Erich Hausen (1900-?), who fell out with the party leadership and emigrated to the USA; Ernst Wollweber (1898-1967), who created a Soviet spy-ring in Breslau before disappearing to the USSR; and Augustin Sandtner (1893-1944), whose career alternated between the Prussian Landtag and various prisons. In April 1933, Sandtner was arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen.

As national politics became increasingly polarised, municipal politics became increasingly violent. In November 1930, the Breslau City Council, long hamstrung by intra-party strife, was superseded by a 'municipal dictatorship'.<sup>84</sup> Politics was played out in physical confrontations on the streets, where Nazi stormtroopers brawled with Socialists and Communists. By 1933, the Nazis had emerged victorious. The Silesian SA leader Edmund Heines was appointed Police President that May. Hitler's bull-necked poacher had turned gamekeeper.

The Reichstag ceased to function normally in 1934, and the democratic facade was dropped. Nonetheless, Reichstag members for Breslau made up a bouquet of Nazi notables. Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski (1899-1972), for example, though born in Pomerania, always had close connections to Silesia. He had served with the 1st Silesian Infantry Regiment during the First World War, then with the *Freikorps* and then with a local border-protection unit. He joined the NSDAP and SS in 1930. He was returned as Reichstag member for Breslau in July 1932 and held the position until the last days of the Third Reich. After a spell in Königsberg, he headed the south-eastern SS sector, based in Breslau, between 1936 and 1941. Von dem Bach was to achieve notoriety as the commander of anti-partisan activities on the Eastern Front and later in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. At Nuremberg, he would be denounced by Göring as a *Schweinehund* and a *Verräter* (pig-dog and traitor) for cooperating with the Allies: a policy that the former *Reichsmarschall* described as 'selling his soul to save his stinking neck'.

Baldur von Schirach (1907-1974) was another fine specimen. The future Gauleiter of Vienna, founder of the Nazi Students' Association and head of the Hitler Youth had an American mother and spoke fluent English. He fell in love with Hitler having heard him speak, and began his Nazi career as a very youthful Reichstag member for Breslau in 1932. By his own admission, he was a man who 'simply believed' in Nazism, but became increasingly disillusioned by its realities. In 1938 he forbade any Hitler Youth participation in the 'criminal action' of *Kristallnacht*. Thereafter a persistent critic of Nazi racial policy, he testified at Nuremberg, describing Hitler as a 'murderer a million times over'.

At the local level, the Nazi Party took charge of affairs through its network

of party leaders or Gauleiter. The first of these in Breslau was Helmuth Bruckner (1896-1945?). Born at Peilau (Pilawa) near Nimptsch (Niemcza), he served in the First World War and in the *Freikorps* before entering right-wing political circles. As a member of the Breslau City Council and editor of the radical *Volksches Wochenblatt für Schlesien*, he effectively established the NSDAP in Silesia. On 15 March 1925, he wrote to Hitler in Munich:

*Dear, honoured Herr Hitler,*

*The undersigned leaders of the former 'National Socialist Freedom Movement' hereby declare their membership of the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party' and place themselves at the disposal of Adolf Hitler. Behind them stands the overwhelming majority of the former members of the 'National Socialist Freedom Movement' in Silesia. Inspired by an unshakeable belief in the victory of the German will for freedom, they bring to you, man of destiny and great leader Adolf Hitler ... a triple Heil!*

Bruckner was rewarded with the post of Gauleiter, which he held in concert with those of *Oberpräsident* of Silesia, representative in the Prussian Landtag and *Gruppenführer* in the SS. His connection with Röhm's faction, however, led to him being stripped of all offices and honours. He is thought to have ended his days working on a Heinkel production line in Rostock.

Josef Wagner (1899-1945) was Bruckner's successor. A Lorrainer and former schoolteacher, he had belonged to the first twelve Nazi MPs of 1928 and had been instrumental in establishing the NSDAP in the Ruhr. He was appointed Gauleiter in Breslau in 1935 when he was still Gauleiter of Westphalia. He reached the peak of his career four years later, by which time he had collected the additional titles of Vice-President of the Prussian *Staatsrat*, Reich Commissioner for Price Setting and Reich Commissioner for the Defence of Silesia. Yet, as a practising Catholic, Wagner was under surveillance and his fall was swift (see above).

Karl Hanke (1903-45) was another schoolteacher, but a man of a different stamp. A protégé of Goebbels, he had risen through the ranks, becoming Under-Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Information and Propaganda in 1937 and an admirer of his mentor's wife, Magda, whom he entertained in private in his Berlin flat. The ensuing scandal forced him to withdraw to the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*, where he participated in the Polish and French campaigns before being promoted by Hitler to the post of Gauleiter of Lower Silesia in early 1941. Nonetheless, Hanke was not popular with the people of Breslau. A party 'yes' man, unlike Wagner, he was nicknamed *Spitzbart*, or 'Goatee', on account of his beard and was disliked because of his overbearing manner and his abuse of office. Appointed *Reichsverteidigungskommissar*, or Reich Commissioner for Defence, in November 1942, he expanded his remit to include responsibility

for all armaments production and defence preparation in Silesia. In this capacity he must bear responsibility for the destruction of Breslau at the end of the war. His blind belief in Nazi propaganda and in the hopeless *Festung* policy, and his fatal delays in ordering the civilian evacuation, would make the city's end as violent and painful as possible.

In true totalitarian manner, however, the Nazis (like the Communists) ran a dual system of parallel party and state authorities. The party ruled; the state acted under party orders as the subordinate administrative branch of government. At the local level, this meant that the City Council was allowed to function as before, but under the strict supervision of Nazi officials. The office of Lord Mayor continued, but was subordinated to that of the Gauleiter. The local elections of March 1933 gave a commanding lead to Nazi candidates, whose representation on the council jumped from three seats to forty-five. The SPD scored nineteen; the Catholic Centre thirteen and the Communists six. But at the first meeting of the council, the Socialist and Communist councillors were unceremoniously excluded. Several were taken straight to the camp at Diirrgoy. One of these was the local SPD secretary, Karl Mache (1880-1944), who had served as Lord Mayor from 1928 to 1933. His fate underlines the extraordinary reversal of fortune that came about under the Nazis. Cast into Diirrgoy in 1933, he lasted eleven years, before dying in Gross Rosen (Rogoznica) just before the end of the war. From 1933 to 1944, his former office of Lord Mayor was filled by 'an old Party comrade', Dr Hans Fridrich.

From then on, the 'New Order' reigned undisturbed. On 10 May 1933, the first of several book-burnings was organised. Official parades took place on almost any pretext - the Führer's birthday, National-Socialist Labour Day, Mother's Day and to celebrate the visits of each and every Nazi dignitary. Speaking Polish in public on such occasions was treated as an offence.

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Population growth had been the prime engine of Breslau's urban development during the imperial period. However, by the early twentieth century, it had slowed considerably. Between 1910 and 1939, Breslau grew by only 23 per cent (to 629,000), whereas Dortmund, for example, enjoyed growth of 153 per cent. With the primary dynamic effectively removed, urban expansion slowed throughout the interwar years, though urban change and renewal were still important themes.

Following the rapid growth of the nineteenth century, Breslau saw the principal urban challenge as the improvement of social conditions and of housing stock. It was blighted by some of the worst social statistics in Germany (see above), which were addressed, at least in part, by an architectural

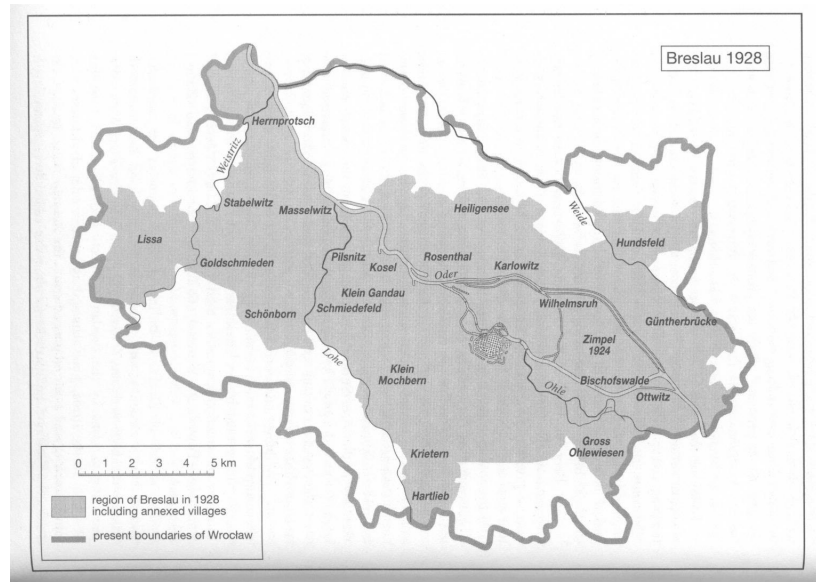
competition for expansion plans, the *Stadterweiterungswettbewerb* of 1921. Entries fell into two competing categories: the building of high-rise blocks versus the laying out of new suburbs.

Max Berg, as head of the Planning Department, was the primary exponent of the high-rise option. The success of his *Jahrhunderthalle* project gave him great prestige. He was enthused by the 'high-rise fever' of the postwar period and submitted numerous plans for the centre of Breslau. He was the first German architect to link his designs to the requirements of the housing shortage. In 1920, he argued for office and business blocks to free up residential areas of the city. He viewed communal living in skyscrapers as the embodiment of the new democratic society. Among his submissions were plans for a high-rise shopping centre at the Freiburger Bahnhof, for an office block on the Lessingplatz and, most controversially, for several variants of a tower block next to the Gothic Rathaus on the Main Square. Unfortunately for Berg, the council was not ready for such designs. The only blocks to be built in Berg's preferred style were the Postcheckamt of 1928 and the Sparkasse (on the Main Square) of 1929. Neither was by Berg himself.

The city fathers encouraged the development of Breslau's suburbs and the incorporation of more surrounding villages. On 1 April 1928, the area of the city more than trebled overnight from 4,962 hectares to 17,509. An intensive construction programme then concentrated on the development of Popelwitz (Popowice), Westend, Grabschen (Grabiszyn) and Zimpel (Sepolno).

The suburb of Zimpel is an interesting example of this approach. Intended as a garden suburb, similar to Bourneville in Birmingham or Margarethenhöhe in Essen, it was begun soon after the First World War according to plans by the Breslau architects Paul Heim and Hermann Wahlich. In the 1920s, 3,000 flats and 250 spacious detached houses were constructed around a central grassed area - the *Zimpeler Wiese*.





In 1932, the Protestant Gustav-Adolf Gedachtniskirche was added to complement the existing Catholic Church of the Holy Family and the Friedrich Ebert School. Ideally situated beside Scheitnig Park, Zimpel became a very desirable place to live and by 1939 housed some 11,000 residents. Its streets were named after birds: Amselweg, Drosselweg, Falkenweg, Sperlingsweg and Elsterweg (Blackbird, Thrush, Falcon, Sparrow and Magpie).

Breslau was no stranger to progressive projects. The Breslau Academy continued to attract and produce many of the leading architects of the era. Its alumni in the 1920s included Adolf Rading, a collaborator with Mies van der Rohe and Gropius at the Bauhaus; Hans Scharoun, later the creator of Berlin's magnificent Philharmonic; and Heinrich Lauterbach, who organised the *WuWa* exhibition in the summer of 1929. The *Wohnung und Werkraum Ausstellung*, or *WuWa* (Home and Workplace Exhibition), established in the suburb of Grüneiche (Dabie), was intended as a showpiece of modernism. The thirty-seven designs, many using innovative techniques such as reinforced concrete and flat roofs, loosed a storm of argument between conservative and progressive architects. But it is now regarded as a milestone in the history of German architecture.

The innovative work of Max Berg was consolidated by the appointment of his former colleague, Richard Konwiarz, as head of the Planning Department.

Konwiarz, who had collaborated with Berg on the *Jahrhunderthalle*, presided over Breslau's greatest interwar construction project - the stadium complex. Built between 1926 and 1928, close to Zimpel and Leerbeutel (Zalesie), the complex comprised a main athletics arena and football pitch, the *Schlesier Kampfbahn*, which could hold 60,000 spectators, and the neighbouring *Jahn Kampfbahn* which offered tennis courts, a firing range, a gymnastics hall, a boxing ring and a fifty-metre swimming pool. It was completed by the *Friesen Wiese*, an open area of 140,000 square metres, with grandstands and some twenty football pitches. The Breslau Sports Stadium was rewarded with the bronze medal for architectural design at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1932. It formed the centrepiece of a rich network of some thirty sporting facilities, which were sufficient to attract the National Sports Festival of 1938 and the Hitler Youth Games of 1942 and 1943. In 1938 it was renamed the 'Hermann Goring Sportsfield'.

The Nazis added little to Breslau's beauty. The ostentatious Party House was built for the NSDAP on the Gartenstrasse in 1933. Another large administrative complex appeared near the Lessing Bridge in 1937 (now the Urząd Miejski). The clearance of several dilapidated districts in the city centre gave rise to solid workers' apartment blocks, or *Volkswohnungen*.

Visitors to Breslau in the late 1930s would have seen several things to impress them. New constructions, new suburbs and new names apart, they could not fail to have been struck - if not actively offended - by the huge swastika banners draped on the front of every major building, and by the gigantic political slogans stretched across the streets. But they would also have been given food for thought by the extraordinary improvement in all branches of travel and communication. If they had travelled to Breslau from Berlin, they would have passed the 310-metre-high mast of the wireless station of the German Post Office at Königs-Wusterhausen, and the long-wave and short-wave masts of *Deutsche Welle* at Zeesen. If they came by motor car, they would have cruised at ease on the *Autobahn* or would at least have seen it under construction. If they had landed at Gandau Aerodrome, eight kilometres to the west of the city centre, they would have arrived in one and a quarter hours and would have seen that Breslau had daily commercial air links with eight German cities, including Cologne, Stuttgart, Gleiwitz and Stettin (Szczecin). If they stayed at the first-class Monopol Hotel, they would have found that forty of the fifty rooms were now fitted with en-suite bathrooms. The loudspeakers on every street corner were a nuisance. But the streets were thronged with modern cars: the elegant Horch, the massive twelve-cylinder Maybach, the sleek Mercedes and, by 1939, an occasional Volkswagen. And the choice of restaurants was wide:

<i>Monopol</i> , Schloss-Platz	<i>Traube</i> , Schweidnitzer Strasse
<i>Savoy</i> , Tauentzien Platz	<i>Würzburger Hofbrau</i>
<i>Haase-Gaststätte</i>	<i>Philippi &amp; Co.</i> , Albrechtstrasse
<i>Peschor Brau</i>	<i>Siechen</i> , Junkern Str.
<i>Schloss Restaurant</i>	<i>Kissling</i> , Junkern Str.
<i>Ratsweinkeller</i> , Ring	<i>Baeker &amp; Braetz</i> , Kaiser Wilhelm Str.
<i>Schweidnitzerkeller</i> , Ring	<i>Fabrig</i> , Zwinger Platz.

In the summer, tourists and trippers were well catered for in a number of open-air garden restaurants at the Liebichs-Hohe, at Zum Dominikaner, at the Terrassen-Gaststätte by the Jahrhunderthalle, and at the Schweizerei in Scheitnig Park. For people with good appetites and no political conscience, there was much to offer.

In the turmoil of political change in the interwar period, streets, bridges and entire towns and villages were renamed. In their eagerness to dismantle the symbols of the imperial regime, Breslau's ruling Socialists in 1920 demanded the rechristening of the Kaiserbrücke as Freiheitsbrücke, or 'Freedom Bridge', and of Kaiser Wilhelm Platz as Reichspräsidentenplatz. Within a few years, another wave of name-changing arrived. During the Third Reich, Freiheitsbrücke reverted to Kaiserbrücke and Reichspräsidentenplatz was rechristened Hindenburgplatz. Then the Nazis added their own brand of nomenclature. Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse became Strasse der SA, Menzelstrasse became Goringstrasse, Grunewald Weg became Horst Wessel Strasse and, predictably, Friedrich Ebert Strasse became Adolf Hitler Strasse. To mark the expansion of the Reich, the Schweitzer Strasse was turned into Revaler Strasse and the old Piasten Strasse into Memelland Strasse. In 1936 the names of a large number of towns and villages of the Breslau region, which were considered 'too Polish', were Germanised. Thus, among many others, Pawelwitz adopted the more 'German'-sounding Wendelborn (now Pawlowice), Boguslawitz became Schwarzaue (now Boguslawice), and Wilschkowitz, Wolfskirch (now Wilczkowice). The Breslau suburbs of Popelwitz, Karlowitz (Karlówice) and Zedlitz (Siedlec) somehow survived unchanged. It was clear that even town planning was not immune to the strictures of the new, integral German nationalism. (And it was a game that the Communists would play with equal relish, but rarely with a full understanding of what had gone before. When the postwar regime was to modify the Oppelner Strasse to Ulica Opolska, they were presumably unaware that the Nazis had chosen Oppelner as a replacement for the Karl Marx Strasse of Weimar days.) The ultimate accolade was bestowed during the *Sportsfest* of 1938, when Breslau was officially designated 'Adolf Hitler's Most Faithful City'.

By far the most exciting plans for Nazi Breslau were the ones that were

never realised. At the many 'Brown Fairs' and 'South-Eastern Fairs' staged by the party in Breslau between 1933 and 1942, numerous projects were launched. At the South-Eastern Fair of 1936, for example, a plan was unveiled that envisaged the construction of a canal between the Oder in Upper Silesia and the Danube at Bratislava, thereby creating a network of waterways linking the Baltic and the Black Sea. Others soon followed. On 19 November 1938, following the Munich Agreement, a treaty was signed between the Third Reich and Czechoslovakia for the construction of a superhighway between Breslau and Vienna with German extraterritorial rights. A second treaty provided for the construction of a major Oder-Danube canal. Perhaps the most ambitious scheme, however, was to put Breslau at the focus of an *Autobahn* network linking Calais with Sofia and, ultimately, Istanbul. Other branches were foreseen linking Kiev, Odessa, Lvov, Cracow and Bucharest with the Reich. Peculiarly, the plan made no mention of the sovereign rights of Poland, Romania or the USSR: the lands through which the motorway would actually be built.