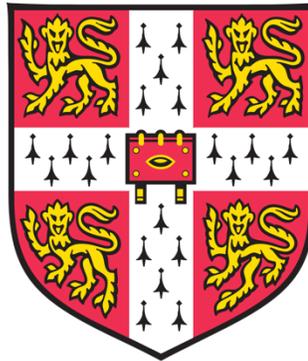


National Socialism in Contested German Borderlands, 1922-1933

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

LUIA BRIGITTE HULSRØJ

NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN CONTESTED GERMAN BORDERLANDS, 1922-1933

This dissertation examines how the special conditions of Weimar Germany's contested borderlands shaped the activities and evolution in them of the ascendant Nazi movement. For this comparative project, it draws on material from five regions – Upper Silesia, the Border Province Posen-West Prussia, Masuria, eastern Pomerania, and Schleswig – that between them encapsulate the diversity, in geographic location and in the fluidity of ethnic and national dividing lines, of the country's borderlands. It opens with a discussion of how reportedly formative experiences of the borders' vulnerability before, during, and just after the First World War influenced later Nazi activists' political trajectories. The second chapter shows how Nazis colonized the commemoration of post-war military and plebiscitary border struggles so as to associate their movement with those events' prestige. Chapter three analyzes other borderland-specific forms of propaganda. The fourth chapter looks more closely at the contradictory claims Nazi borderland propaganda made about the association between race and nation. On the one hand, the movement viewed this relationship as coextensive and fixed, from which it followed that the borderlands were theatres of conflict between well-defined and all-encompassing peoples. On the other, Nazi activists in the borderlands relaxed a hard-and-fast racial determinism that they understood to be impracticable for their political, irredentist work. The fifth chapter focuses on political violence of an ethno-nationalist nature, committed to quell the possibility of further foreign claims on German land. The sixth chapter explores Nazis' conflict and cooperation about border matters with the government and the wider far right. The final chapter surveys the reception of Nazism's borderland activism by non-Germans and by ethnic Germans across the border. The rising Nazi movement, it overall emerges, engaged actively with concerns and

resentments common in regions where Germany's post-war territorial losses constituted an acute, immediate reality.

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Introduction: National Socialism and Weimar Germany's Contested Borderlands

“I think that especially my borderland experiences led me to the N.S.D.A.P.,” August Marleiter wrote in 1934.¹ The Upper Silesian was one of almost 700 respondents to an essay contest that the American sociologist Theodore Abel, with the support of the NSDAP, arranged that year in order to make sense of Germany's recent political transformation through first-hand accounts from those who had joined the party before 1933.² Of the respondents over a third had, like Marleiter, a connection to “[e]thnic border areas” and “[o]ccupied areas.”³ That amounted, Peter Merkl, who statistically analyzed Abel's collection in the 1970s, calculated, to an “overrepresentation of between 2.0 and 3.0.”⁴ While some of these essay writers did not mention the borderland nature of the places they lived in or had lived in, others, like Marleiter, foregrounded how their experience of the German borders' vulnerability had shaped their political outlook and priorities. That border concerns underpinned their political consciousness, their texts implied or, like Marleiter's, professed, had laid the ground for their eventual embrace of the NSDAP.

This narrative that nationalist competition prepared the way for Nazism in the border regions has been taken up by one branch of the literature about borderlands. In an analysis of a sample of around 1,500 war criminals, sociologist Michael Mann, for instance, found that refugees from the lost territories but also natives of Upper Silesia, Schleswig-Holstein, East Prussia, and, to a lesser extent, the Baden-Saar-Palatinate region were overrepresented in his sample, by factors of 1.94, 1.5, 1.33, and 1.25

¹ “Ich glaube, daß gerade meine Grenzlanderlebnisse mich mit zur N.S.D.A.P. geführt haben.”; August Marleiter, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/august-span-classqueryhmarleiterspan?ctx=50ebb136-9f0a-45f5-9b30-f5f1dff00a79&idx=0>.

² “Newly Digitized Nazi Biograms Now Available,” Hoover Institution, last modified January 9, 2017, <https://www.hoover.org/news/newly-digitized-nazi-biograms-now-available>.

³ Peter Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 18.

⁴ Ibid.

respectively compared to these regions' share in the German population.⁵ Similarly, he noted, “[s]ome 12 percent of the top Nazis but only 4 percent of Weimar Cabinet Ministers had been born abroad.”⁶ “[E]mbittered ethnic imperial revisionism” was, Mann therefore postulates, a driving force for Nazism.⁷

While it does contain chapters acknowledging that borderlands were neither intrinsically nationalist nor violent, the edited volume *Shatterzone of Empires* overwhelmingly agrees that once nationalism did take hold in these regions, they became zones of often violent tensions. Nationalism there, after all, could never be merely about solidarity with one's own, for the question of how the envisioned nation state was to deal with those of a different ethnicity or national identification was acute there. The ethnic others among whom nationalists of any given stripe lived had to be tolerated, assimilated, or purged.⁸ Violence, all the more brutal for being so fratricidal,⁹ often resulted and, the editors add, was “intended not only to evict or to kill members of other ethnic or religious groups but also to erase a past whose memory would deny the legitimacy of the perpetrators.”¹⁰ The Nazis, however, appear in this narrative, fleshed out in the volume's both geographically and chronologically varied contributions, only in the context of the Second World War.

Gregor Thum, in his chapter in *Shatterzone of Empires* as well as in his contributions to the volume *Helpless Imperialists*, which he co-edited, proffers an explanation for why the Nazi regime perpetrated unprecedentedly lethal nationalist population politics during the war. His premise is that imperialists everywhere were,

⁵ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 225.

⁶ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 156.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz, “Introduction: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013), 5.

⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

counterintuitively, haunted by fear, since their ambitions were always greater than the means, however awesome, available to them to accomplish these ends.¹¹ Simultaneously, imperial failure would mean humiliation in the international arena.¹² In this context, Thum describes, the lingering fear of another Polish uprising combined with anxieties concerning demographic trends unfavorable for Germans in the Eastern provinces prompted the Prussian inner colonization programs of the late 19th century.¹³ When it became evident around the turn of the century that these measures were ineffectual, the radicalization of inner colonization was called for, including by interest groups and cultural figures.¹⁴ These demands led to drastic new laws, such as one permitting the expropriation of Polish landowners, but in the pre-war Empire, which generally honored the rule of law, they never could unfold their full potential.¹⁵ During the First World War, the army leadership made far-reaching plans for a Germanization of Eastern Europe, but instead the conflict ended in Germany's defeat, of which the loss of Eastern territories became "*the symbol.*"¹⁶ Their recouping became the litmus test for the nation's resurgence, so that defeat stoked rather than decreased Germans' imperial ambitions.¹⁷ How the Third Reich waged the Second World War in Eastern Europe, Thum maintains, was the product of having learned from "the experience of the failed pre-1918 Germanization policy" and of therefore having determined to abandon the legal and ethical constraints that had brought about this failure.¹⁸

¹¹ Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum, "Helpless Imperialists: Introduction," in *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Failure, Fear, and Radicalization*, eds. Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 8-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹³ Gregor Thum, "Imperialists in Panic: The Evocation of Empire at Germany's Eastern Frontier around 1900," in *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Failure, Fear, and Radicalization*, eds. Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 142-144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145-147; Gregor Thum, "Megalomania and Angst," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013), 52-54.

¹⁵ Thum, "Imperialists in Panic," 154-155.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

Liulevicius too in his *The German Myth of the East* explored Nazism's relationship with evolving ideas about the East. The East, he avers, was for Germans a space onto which aspirations for and anxieties about their own nation were projected.¹⁹ In the late 19th century, when the crisis of confidence in Germanization policy that Thum too describes took hold, the East came to be seen by some as an entity unto itself, perennially locked in nationalist struggle. Simultaneously, the notion of the Drive to the East – that is, of a German predestination to expand eastward – came into its own.²⁰ Germany, despite all current shortcomings of Germanization efforts, was destined to prevail. The First World War resulted in grander plans than ever for the East, particularly in the wake of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk,²¹ but these came crashing down, all the more shockingly for having been preceded by such elevated hopes, when Germany was defeated and had to cede many of its Eastern territories.²² Following this diminution of the German presence in the East, all sorts of ideas about how to engage with this space circulated. These ranged from visions for utopian socialist worker's colonies²³ over Stresemann's policy of trying to keep open the possibility of a border revision by rapprochement with the Western Allies²⁴ to the *völkisch* Artaman League's hopes of creating a bulwark of Germandom with the volunteers it sent to Eastern farms.²⁵ From this kaleidoscope of ideas concerning the East, the Nazis, when they came to power, selected "the worst and most extreme" ones.²⁶ Nazi thinking about the East was a mainstay of propaganda and education even before the Second World War²⁷ and, in the

¹⁹ Vejas Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2.

²⁰ Ibid., 121-122.

²¹ Ibid., 145-147.

²² Ibid., 152.

²³ Ibid., 162.

²⁴ Ibid., 161-162.

²⁵ Ibid., 163.

²⁶ Ibid., 170.

²⁷ Ibid., 178-181.

shape of – among other things – the Holocaust²⁸ and the General Plan East, came to horrible fruition during it.²⁹

Nationalization and attendant conflict was, however, only part of the story, for national indifference, that is, the lack of any stable identification with one national community, remained widespread at least among the populations of some borderlands. The literature on this topic that has sprung up in the past two decades took Rogers Brubaker's 2004 *Ethnicity without Groups* as its formative influence. Conceived as a critique of what he terms "clichéd constructivism," Brubaker's work critiques scholarship that demonstrates the constructed nature of ethnic or national groups, yet, assuming stability once constructed, carries on treating such groups as fundamental units of analysis, thereby continuing to reify the very categories of practice constructivism is meant to challenge.³⁰ Instead, the sociologist urges the investigation of "group-ness," which he defines as the degree to which a set of people identifies as a group, as a variable.³¹ Such a focus on group-ness and on the processes that influence it can, Brubaker proposes, de-center ethnic and national groups as the subjects of scholarship. The study of group-ness would also allow researchers to concentrate their analysis on cases of low group-ness, in contrast to scholarship's traditional concentration on instances of high group-ness, which has contributed to making ethnic and national groups appear natural, fixed, and all-encompassing.³²

Tara Zahra laid out how Brubaker's ideas applied to historical practice in "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis." In the article, Zahra makes the case that the way to "rescue History from the Nation" is to go beyond scaling the focus of historical inquiry up or down to the sub- or transnational

²⁸ Ibid., 194-195.

²⁹ Ibid., 200.

³⁰ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2-3.

³¹ Ibid., 11.

³² Ibid., 12.

levels and to make a point instead of investigating instances of low national group-ness.³³ Such low group-ness is not, she insists, a pre-modern phenomenon, definitively overcome by the nation-building processes chronicled in such classics as *Peasants into Frenchmen*,³⁴ but rather a reality that persisted well into the twentieth century even in some of Europe's most highly developed regions, notably Silesia.³⁵ Despite how commonplace national indifference was, it has not left "much of a paper trail."³⁶ The nationally indifferent naturally did not organize.³⁷ Nationalists, meanwhile, strove to eradicate national indifference and obscured its persistence in the face of their nationalizing efforts through practices like censuses that did not record bilingualism.³⁸ For their part, historians have focused on nationalist politics and instances of high national group-ness. Even social and cultural history, whose professed aim it is to write history from below, have concentrated on the successful building of national loyalties on the ground and on nationalism's penetration of everyday life. Where national loyalties have been found to have been weak or irrelevant, this circumstance has been attributed to the overriding significance of other – for instance dynastic, regional, or religious – loyalties.³⁹ Historians, Zahra suggests, have been unable to conceive of groups that simply lacked national loyalties. Traceable only in indirect ways, national indifference comprised a range of behaviors according to location and period, from the total lack of any national identity still possible in the Austrian Empire to opportunistic side switching in, for example, post-war states where a nationality was a requirement.⁴⁰ These ways of being are united only by their failure to conform to nationalists' expectation that national

³³ Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 94.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-112.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 101-104.

identity be inherent and unchanging.⁴¹ National indifference is thus “fundamentally a negative and nationalist category.”⁴² Just, however, because national indifference was a non-community originating in the nationalist imagination does not diminish its value as a subject of study, Zahra argues, any more than its imagined nature diminishes that of the nation. Once imagined, national indifference became a category no less real or consequential than the nation itself.

Unlike the nationalists who invented the category, however, historians should, Tahra urges, avoid considering national indifference an aberration and instead assume it as the default state, seeking to explain why and how under specific circumstances national group-ness increased.⁴³ Zahra herself published a monograph chronicling how Czech and German nationalist activists sought to nationalize children in regions where national indifference remained the status quo. Jeremy King’s *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans* similarly recounts how nationalist politics triumphed over non-national and supra-national ways of being in Bohemian Budweis, where language use was once considered incidental and dynastic loyalties reigned supreme, and turned the populace into one divided between Czechs and Germans. Pieter Judson, meanwhile, has catalogued the fields through activism in which nationalists hoped to shape the Austrian Empire’s largely nationally indifferent language frontiers into the zones of encounter and conflict between clearly delineated nationalities that nationalist ideology held they should be.

In Schleswig-Holstein too, Peter Thaler has demonstrated, national identification was voluntaristic and changeable in nature. Citing Ernest Renan’s provocative 1882 characterization of the nation as a “daily plebiscite” and apparently unaware of more recent literature about national indifference,⁴⁴ Thaler draws attention to the endorsement

⁴¹ Ibid., 103.

⁴² Ibid., 105.

⁴³ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁴ “un plébiscite de tous les jours”; Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?,” accessed May 5, 2019. https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Qu%E2%80%99est-ce_qu%E2%80%99une_nation_%3F#:~:text=Une%20nation%20est%20donc%20une,de%20continuer%20la%20vie%20commune.

of a shared history and of a common vision for the future as a central component of national identity.⁴⁵ In Schleswig-Holstein, Thaler elaborated, speakers of the Danish Southern Jutish dialect from the mid-19th century onward had a choice between two developing nationalisms. Some favored Denmark, part of which kingdom the duchies had been since the 15th century,⁴⁶ whereas others valued the cultural, political, and economic ties with Germany more.⁴⁷ Which past individuals preferred to invoke was, furthermore, subject to change and depended on political circumstance in particular.⁴⁸

Much more attention than on Schleswig has been bestowed on Upper Silesia. That ethnicity and nationality did not map neatly onto one another there was evidenced by the unintuitive 1921 plebiscite result, which saw Germany triumph over Poland in a referendum that queried which state inhabitants wanted their – after all ethnically majority Polish – region to belong to. Richard Blanke, for one, has pointed out that for Germany to prevail in a region that ethno-objectively should have been Polish, forty percent of the votes for Germany would have had to be cast by Polish-speakers.⁴⁹ This circumstance has led the plebiscite's outcome, then and now, to be dismissed or to be attributed to German advantages and pressure. Poland, however, had some advantages of its own.⁵⁰ In any case, Blanke noted, advantages mattered only because of the widespread national indifference, for in a perfect nationalist world, voters would have chosen their – supposedly inherent – nationality without regard for expediencies of the moment.⁵¹ “In sum,” Blanke concluded, “aside from a conditioned acceptance of objective or ethnic nationality as the only real kind, we do not have very good reasons for assuming the

⁴⁵ Peter Thaler, *Of Mind and Matter: The Duality of National Identity in the German-Danish Borderlands* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

⁴⁶ Ibid., could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

⁴⁷ Ibid., could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

⁴⁸ Ibid., could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

⁴⁹ Richard Blanke, “Upper Silesia, 1921: The Case for Subjective Nationality,” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 2 (1975), 243-244.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 245-255.

⁵¹ Ibid., 251-252.

existence of underlying, truer national sentiments among the 300,000 Upper Silesian Poles who voted for Germany. ... The best explanation for this seems to lie in the primacy of subjective sentiments over objective characteristics in the determination of national orientation.”⁵²

Blanke’s is an argument for a civic rather than an ethnic understanding of national identity, but Upper Silesia has also become the second focus of the study of persistent national flexibility, besides work like that of Zahra, King, and Judson, which is rooted in debates about the internal national frontiers’ role in the Austrian Empire’s decline. The role that Catholicism and the Church played in maintaining national indifference in Upper Silesia is illuminated by James Bjork in *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*. He tells how the *Kulturkampf* politicized Catholicism and bonded Upper Silesian Catholics of all linguistic backgrounds,⁵³ just for a Polish particularist faction to emerge within the Catholic Center party shortly thereafter.⁵⁴ This Polish wing of the party fared well in the 1893 *Reichstag* election⁵⁵ and in the ensuing decade both German and Polish nationalist activism outside the confines of the Center party flourished.⁵⁶ The regional National Democratic movement under Wojciech Korfanty won *Reichstag* seats in 1903⁵⁷ and did so even more resoundingly in 1905.⁵⁸ German nationalist associations too flourished.⁵⁹ By the early 1910s, however, National Democracy was losing ground, for its delegates had not maneuvered the *Reichstag* successfully.⁶⁰ All the while, the conservative Bülow government’s victimization of Polish nationalists and other Upper Silesian Catholics alike

⁵² Ibid., 256.

⁵³ James Bjork, *Neither German Nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 21-37.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 44-46.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 42-43.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 89-98.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 106-109.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 114-115.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 93-98.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 145-147.

had led to rapprochement between them.⁶¹ In the 1912 *Reichstag* election, National Democracy thus lost a seat and narrowed its lead over the Center party,⁶² which recuperated some of its earlier electoral losses.⁶³ A revival of Polish nationalism took place late in the First World War, however, because Korfanty understood how to channel into his movement the social unrest that rocked Germany from 1917 onwards.⁶⁴

After the war, the Allies initially intended to grant Poland the mainly Polish-speaking region outright, as T. Hunt Tooley has documented.⁶⁵ In response, separatism, a movement advocating instead the idea of a genuinely supranational, independent Upper Silesian state united by its Catholicism, gained traction.⁶⁶ In the end, British prime minister David Lloyd George persuaded the American president Woodrow Wilson to hold a plebiscite before making decisions about Upper Silesia's future, hoping that such a vote would avert future German irredentism should that country lose.⁶⁷ Both the German and Polish plebiscite campaigns made substantial concessions to Upper Silesian self-rule, since separatism had proved so popular and the powerful Center Party, though German-leaning, continued to flirt with it. Poland, for one, was quick to pledge sweeping autonomy for a future Upper Silesian voivodeship.⁶⁸ The Prussian government accorded Upper Silesia provincial status⁶⁹ and passed a law affording provinces greater independence, including in language and school policy.⁷⁰ These pledges were complemented by vigorous state-funded propaganda efforts, which on the German side were run most notably by the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimmattreuer Oberschlesier*.⁷¹ Polish

⁶¹ Ibid., 131-133.

⁶² Ibid., 151-152.

⁶³ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 189-192.

⁶⁵ T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 46.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 57; Bjork, *Neither German Nor Pole* 198-203.

⁶⁷ Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, 49-51.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁷¹ Ibid., 157-158.

nationalists additionally launched two short-lived uprisings, in the summers of 1919 and 1920 respectively. In contrast to this nationalist fervor, the overwhelming majority of Catholic priests continued to counsel moderation and unity in religion,⁷² as Bjork recounts, with about 40% refraining from publicly voicing any national preference at all.⁷³ Once the referendum finally took place on March 20, 1921, it was Germany that carried the day, winning 59.6% of votes at 97.5% voter participation. Though much has been made of German intimidation, violence, Tooley has convincingly argued, had no determining effect on this outcome, for it only escalated after the referendum.⁷⁴ Disgruntled Poles rose up a third time, succeeding in conquering two-thirds of the province.⁷⁵ German *Freikorps* and *Selbstschutz* groups, covertly encouraged by the government,⁷⁶ soon pushed the insurgents back, however, a triumph epitomized by their victory in the battle of St Anne Mountain.⁷⁷ Quiet returned. In the fall, the League of Nations drew a border that awarded almost three-quarters of Upper Silesia to Germany but two-thirds of the region's industrial district, theretofore Germany's second largest after the Ruhr, to Poland.⁷⁸

Neither country accepted this border as final, since contemporaries recognized that the plebiscite result was not the product of firm national loyalties. In fact, the plebiscite and border change only spurred on further nationalizing competition. A ritual rivalry of memory cultures developed, Peter Polak-Springer has demonstrated, that lasted through the Second World War. Germany and Poland each countered the respective other

⁷² Ibid., 240-241.

⁷³ Ibid., 233-236.

⁷⁴ T. Hunt Tooley, "German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919-1921," *Central European History* 21 (1988), 96-98.

⁷⁵ Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, 255.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 257.

country's commemorative rallies,⁷⁹ monumental buildings,⁸⁰ propaganda films, and the like with equivalent events and projects of their own.⁸¹ As a result, Germany's and Poland's rival nationalist cultures were, in many ways, interchangeable, as the Germanization of the Forum Katowice, an interwar Polish architectural prestige project, after Germany's annexation of Eastern Upper Silesia in 1939 illustrates. One overly modern building was torn down, while the others simply had Polish symbols removed and German ones added. The engraved letters RP, short for "*Rzeczpospolita Polska*," on what was now the *Gauhaus* were simply reinterpreted to mean "*Regierungspräsidium*."⁸² Nazi campaigns during the war to rid Eastern Upper Silesia of all signs of Polish heritage, including beloved Catholic imagery like the Black Madonna of Częstochowa,⁸³ or to increase German language use met with resentment.⁸⁴ Therefore, Nazi authorities were soon no longer hailed as liberators but, even more so than their Polish predecessors, perceived as a carpet-bagging, condescending, intrusive external elite, which treated natives as second-class nationals and hence citizens.⁸⁵ In Western Upper Silesia too, Polak-Springer highlights, Nazis' imposition of a nationalist reading of the landscape was received largely with disinterest. Locals, for example, ignored the monumental *Reichsehrenmal* for the *Freikorps* fighters of 1921 erected by the Nazis on St Anne Mountain and instead continue to treat the mount primarily as a pilgrimage site.⁸⁶ The Nazis did not definitively prevail in the contest of memory cultures that had raged since the border alteration.

⁷⁹ Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-89* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 58-77.

⁸⁰ Peter Polak-Springer, "Landscapes of Revanchism: Building and the Contestation of Space in an Industrial Polish-German Borderland, 1922-1945," *Central European History* 45, no. 3 (September 2012), 492-513.

⁸¹ Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 69-71.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 156-157.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 170-174.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 150; *Ibid.*, 162-163.

⁸⁶ Polak-Springer, "Landscapes of Revanchism," 511.

Whereas Polak-Springer examines Nazism's interaction with national indifference only in the context of the Third Reich, Brendan Karch's monograph *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland* does touch on the pre-1933 relationship between the Nazi movement and Western Upper Silesia's Polish minority. Despite harassment at Nazi hands, Polish activists, he claims, at that time placed hopes in the Nazi rhetoric of racial separation, since they thought it would end an assimilationist competition they were losing.⁸⁷ In the first years of the Third Reich, these Polish nationalists could feel validated in their optimism, Karch continues. The Polish minority enjoyed protection from *Gleichschaltung*, such that Upper Silesians could within its organizations "reconstitute social and religious networks that had been dismantled."⁸⁸ Belonging to Polish groups furthermore provided exemption from onerous new duties, like those attached to the *Reichserbhofgesetz* and participation in Nazi organizations.⁸⁹ Membership surged.⁹⁰ After the Geneva Accord that since 1921 had guaranteed minority rights on both sides of the Upper Silesian border expired in 1937, however, the Nazi government drastically increased Germanizing pressures and the persecution of Polish nationalist activists.⁹¹ In the short term this change in policy did succeed in suppressing most traces of the region's Polish heritage, including, most controversially, Polish-language church services.⁹² The Second World War, however, reversed these Germanizing advances. At first, the outbreak of war led to the sending of Polish nationalists to concentration camps, which scared the population.⁹³ Overall, however, Nazi administrators could hardly treat Upper Silesia's population as one that was not fully German, since that would have been an admission of Germanization's failure and one that would have cost the army willing

⁸⁷ Brendan Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 182-183.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 230-232.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 240-244.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 245-246.

soldiers.⁹⁴ Consequently, Western Upper Silesia was not included in the *Volkliste* that was instituted in annexed parts of Poland, including Eastern Upper Silesia.⁹⁵ That the thoroughly German nature of Western Upper Silesians was a fiction was exposed, though, when the region saw an influx of, sometimes forced, laborers, including many from the region's formerly Polish portion. Western Upper Silesians and these new arrivals proved impossible to distinguish, which meant that prohibitions on mixing could not be enforced. The resultant frequent, often amicable mingling with Polish laborers gave rise to Western Upper Silesians using Polish more again.⁹⁶ By the time the Red Army marched on Upper Silesia, it was therefore as outwardly Polish as it had not been since before the plebiscite.⁹⁷ This circumstance enabled most Upper Silesians to stay in their *Heimat* when it became part of Poland after the war. Upper Silesians' performance of nationality had thus continued to successfully adapt.

In literature about national indifference at borders other than Upper Silesia's, engagement with Nazism is sparse. Thaler's study of Schleswig in fact makes no mention of Nazism at all. Jeremy King addresses the influence Nazism's rise to power in Germany exerted on the dynamics between Czechs and Sudeten Germans in Bohemia and the nationality policies pursued in the wartime Protectorate only in the final twenty pages of his monograph.⁹⁸ Judson focuses even more exclusively on the imperial era, with only the concluding chapter looking forward into the post-World War I era. Even this chapter concerns itself primarily with the peace settlement, observing about the Nazis only that it was their policy of population shifting, alongside the Soviets', that finally nationalized East Central Europe, not the success of nationalist activism.⁹⁹ Only Tara

⁹⁴ Ibid., 249-251.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 249.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 251-255.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 256.

⁹⁸ Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 169-188.

⁹⁹ Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 255-256.

Zahra in her *Kidnapped Souls* substantially contributes to understandings of Nazism, in one chapter chronicling in detail the tension between Nazi racial thought and the Protectorate's more complex national reality. Her findings will be explored in more detail in a later chapter of this dissertation.

Both the literature about national indifference and that about a conflict-centric vision of the borderlands have their merits and defects. This dissertation engages with both narratives and simultaneously puts the Nazi movement's interaction before 1933 with the borderlands' specific circumstances center stage in a way it has not been before. Nazism's borderland activism, it emerges, actually speaks to both strands of historical literature about border areas: on the one hand, it relied on hardened nationalists who saw their home regions as battlegrounds between nations, but on the other, it had to appeal to ethnically ambiguous or nationally indifferent populations. That the pursuit of nationalist conflict and the accommodation of more complex ethnic and national realities coexisted in the Nazi movement challenges the tendency of scholarship to treat the two prevailing narratives about borderlands as mutually exclusive. If widespread and resilient national indifference was the fundamental reality of borderlands, then nationalism was really just a movement dangerously but superficially superimposed on that reality, one side appears to think. Very real violence and tension can end up being downplayed and the perspectives of those, who genuinely did see their world through a nationalist lens, neglected. The other scholarly faction, meanwhile, by buying uncritically into nationalist historical narratives about borderlands fails to see the circumstances that contradict these. This dissertation will examine the interplay between the Nazi movement and both of the important facets of borderland reality, nationalist strife and national indifference.

Borderlands' reality was, however, hardly monolithic. Germany's interwar border regions differed from one another in myriad ways and this dissertation's case studies have been carefully chosen to reflect that diversity: the Border Province Posen-West Prussia, composed of the sparse remains of the two provinces once obtained in the Polish Partitions; the Pomeranian *Regierungsbezirk* Köslin, which jutted out far into the Polish

Corridor; Masuria, with its Polish-speaking but loyally German population; Upper Silesia, industrial, Catholic, and largely nationally indifferent; and finally Schleswig, on the border with Denmark. In selecting these regions for study, I have relied on a relatively narrow understanding of the term borderland. I have included only immediate border regions, corresponding in several cases to post-war plebiscite zones. While the Border Province and Upper Silesia have been included in their entirety, such an approach seemed less prudent in other cases. After all, while the *Regierungsbezirk* Köslin protruded into the Polish Corridor to near Danzig, Pomerania's westernmost parts were nearer Berlin than the Polish border. Likewise, whereas Schleswig had seen a border referendum in 1920 and lost its northern half to Denmark, Holstein, which extends all the way down to Hamburg, had not been included in that vote. Masuria, which too had been subject to a plebiscite in 1920, lay in the much larger and diverse province of East Prussia. In these three cases, I have therefore only incorporated the relevant parts of the provinces into this study. Other scholars have employed looser definitions of the term borderland, with Michael Mann, for example, using entire provinces as his units of analysis. Peter Merkl likewise worked with large territorial units in his statistical evaluation of Abel's collection. Yet Mann himself observed that the borderland-specific effects he found increased in strength with proximity to the border.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, I have made my study more fine-grained.

It should further be noted that the term borderland is used here as a shorthand for, specifically, contested borderlands. When interwar Germans spoke of *Grenzländer*, they tended, after all, to refer to those regions that had a recent history of nationalist struggle. Naturally, Germany had other international borders that do not fit that description, such as the borders with Switzerland or Czechoslovakia. These cases are not at issue here.

There were, of course, more contested borderlands than could be considered here. In East Prussia, the *Regierungsbezirk* Marienwerder had like Masuria been subject to a

¹⁰⁰ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 227.

plebiscite in 1920 and Tilsit and its surrounds bordered the League of Nations-administered Memel region. Lower Silesia was wedged in between Poland and Czechoslovakia. Most importantly, of the numerous respondents to Abel's essay contest who were connected to borderlands many hailed from territories adjoining France. Integrating these areas would have provided an added counterweight, besides Schleswig, to the Eastern focus of this study. However, the occupation of the Rhineland was a primary driver of radicalization there and it would have been too difficult within the scope of this project to try to disentangle that radicalizing effect from any the border alteration in and of itself exerted.¹⁰¹ Further archival research would also not have been feasible during the timespan of a doctoral project, especially as the areas bordering France did not neatly map onto a *Regierungsbezirk* as other case studies do, complicating the search for relevant archival material. Similar considerations apply to the German areas abutting Eupen-Malmédy, which had been lost to Belgium after the war. That said, a handful of Abel's respondents from near France did testify that it was not solely the experience of occupation that had given rise to their receptivity for Nazism but also that of expulsion from Alsace-Lorraine or that of the new border's proximity. Where I had in any case come across material like this from borderlands other than my case studies, it has sometimes been incorporated. A more systematic examination of Nazism in these regions does, however, remain desirable.

Given that other Western border areas will not be considered, questions may arise regarding whether Schleswig, the only Western borderland included, can be legitimately compared to the four Eastern regions and whether, therefore, this dissertation can claim to arrive at any conclusions about German contested borderlands in general. After all, how Germans perceived Denmark and Poland differed considerably, with the latter, but not the former, held to be inferior to Germany in terms of both racial worth and civilizational level. Arguably because Denmark had never been seen as lesser, it was in

¹⁰¹ Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika*, 189-206.

the early 1930s not characterized by the same nationally motivated violence that plagued the other case studies. In every other respect, however, Schleswig exhibited the same conditions as its Eastern counterparts: It too struggled economically, blaming its difficulties partly on the loss of its hinterland.¹⁰² Its population too remained, in large parts, nationally indifferent. Its political culture too, like its pioneers of Nazism, was shaped by the decades-old national struggle, the recent plebiscite, and the territorial loss. It too saw critiques of the republican government and its constituent parties clothed in criticism of their handling of the border situation. And its National Socialists too were faced with a non-German minority on their side of the border and a vocal ethnic German minority on the other. What is more, at the time the borderlands, including Schleswig and the others studied here, understood themselves as a community of regions linked by a shared fate. As will be shown in the chapters devoted to commemorative culture and Nazi propaganda in the borderlands, regional Nazi party branches – like regional governments – would send one another telegrams on the anniversaries of plebiscites. Dedicated borderlands pages in regional Nazi newspapers carried stories about other border areas. Every comparative study foregrounds relevant commonalities like these, while acknowledging but fundamentally relegating to the background sometimes considerable differences.

¹⁰² Peter Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg* (Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte e.V., 1986), 113-116.

One thing that most but, it should be noted, not all case studied considered here had in common was the magnitude of electoral support for the NSDAP. In Germany as a

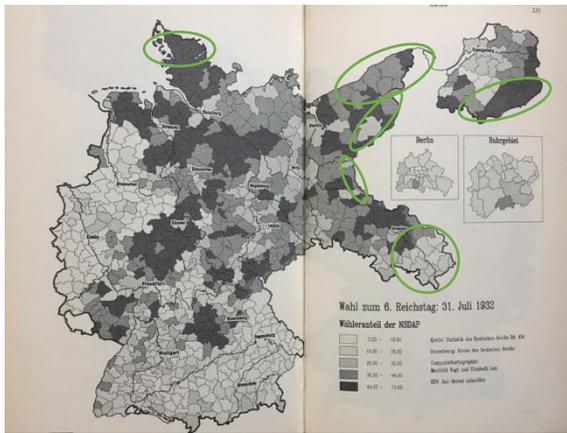


Figure 1: Jürgen Falter, Thomas Lindenberger, and Siegfried Schumann, *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986), 230-231.

The case study areas have been marked.

only *Wahlkreis* in a free election to return a Nazi majority, of 51%.¹⁰⁴ In Upper Silesia, in contrast, the party received a share of votes below the national average. Only 1% of Upper Silesians in 1928 and 9.5% in 1930 cast their ballots for the NSDAP, but the gap had narrowed by 1932. 29.2% and 26.8% of voters endorsed the NSDAP in July and November respectively of that year.¹⁰⁵ The Center Party, meanwhile, maintained a fairly steady vote share in the region throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. This lesser electoral success in Upper Silesia does not, however, invalidate investigating how Nazism there interacted with the province’s borderland nature. After all, Nazis in Upper Silesia might have been a minority, but a sizable and vocal one that, as Bolko Janus

whole, the Nazi vote share in *Reichstag* elections jumped from 2.6% in 1928 to 18.3% in 1930 and from there to 37.3% and 33.1% in July and November 1932 respectively.¹⁰³ Schleswig, Masuria, eastern Pomerania’s Lębork county, and parts of the Border Province surpassed these national vote shares greatly: There, the NSDAP in July 1932 won between 44% and 73% (see Fig. 1). In that election,

Schleswig-Holstein became the first and

¹⁰³ “Reichstagswahlen: Gesamtergebnisse“, *Wahlen in Deutschland*, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wrtw.htm>.

¹⁰⁴ “Reichstagswahlen: Provinz Schleswig-Holstein“, *Wahlen in Deutschland*, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wuupschleswigholstein.htm>.

¹⁰⁵ “Reichstagswahlen: Provinz Oberschlesien“, *Wahlen in Deutschland*, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wuupoberschlesien.htm>.

observes in his monograph about Upper Silesia, was able to significantly influence the tone and themes of public discourse.¹⁰⁶

Another thing to be mindful of is that border regions were also characterized by circumstances other than their proximity to borders and that these too factored into Nazism's rise there. Except for Upper Silesia, all the case studies examined here were Protestant agrarian regions. Such areas have been found by psephologists to have been core constituencies for the NSDAP across Germany by 1930.¹⁰⁷ The NSDAP became, Wolfram Pyta has argued, a *Milieupartei*,¹⁰⁸ with an exceptionally well-organized agrarian propaganda apparatus that penetrated into the smallest villages.¹⁰⁹ The party's trademark was, naturally, its emphasis on *Volksgemeinschaft*,¹¹⁰ which was well-received in those villages, notably in Schleswig-Holstein, that were fairly socio-economically homogeneous and had flat hierarchies.¹¹¹ The idea also held out to farmers the promise of an elevated position in a future *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹¹² In the present, voting for the largest opposition party, farmers hoped, would result in greater attentiveness to their needs on the part of the parliaments and on the part of urbanites, many of whom were likewise joining the movement.¹¹³ The notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* fell on less fertile ground in the socially stratified East Elbian manorial villages.¹¹⁴ Even there, though, the party thrived, because it made attractive political offers to all social groups: Estate owners were lured with the prospect of positions in the movement and in an eventual Nazi state

¹⁰⁶ Bolko Janus, *Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933* (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 262.

¹⁰⁷ Jürgen Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (München: Beck, 1991), 160-161, 184.

¹⁰⁸ Wolfram Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft und Parteipolitik 1918-1933: Die Verschränkung von Milieu und Parteien in den protestantischen Landgebieten Deutschlands in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1996), 12-13.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 353-383.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 331-332.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 326.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 333-334.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 338.

commensurate with their social rank.¹¹⁵ Simultaneously the party took up land agents' demand that formal qualifications for their job be introduced, so that competition from cheaper lateral recruits, which exploded during the Great Depression, would be eliminated.¹¹⁶ Pledges to improve, without class struggle, living conditions and opportunities for professional advancement appealed to farm laborers.¹¹⁷ Among both of the latter groups the NSDAP was furthermore popular because unlike the DNVP it was not, for all its efforts to win them over, as explicitly a party of the *Junker*.¹¹⁸ Shelley Baranowski's narrative in *The Sanctity of Rural Life* is similar, albeit with a greater emphasis on the significance of *Junker* leverage. Using Pomerania as a case study, she describes the centrality to rural self-concepts of what she calls the "rural myth," the idea that an idealized version of rural life was the foundation of a healthy nation.¹¹⁹ Traditionally, the DNVP had been the champion and beneficiary of this myth. With that party in decline, the NSDAP could take up this role.¹²⁰ Though Baranowski extensively chronicled how the Nazis and the older right attacked one another,¹²¹ she ultimately concludes that the Nazi movement profited decisively from the united nationalist front that both it and the DNVP upheld.¹²² Socially influential, DNVP-supporting *Junker* pressured those dependent on them, for instance, to participate in far-right events and campaigns that incorporated the NSDAP.¹²³ Their discourses were shared with the Nazis¹²⁴ and they displayed "benevolent neutrality" toward the ascendant movement.¹²⁵

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 339.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 347-348.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 350-352.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 348, 352.

¹¹⁹ Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life: Nobility, Protestantism, and Nazism in Weimar Prussia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6-8.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 171.

¹²¹ Ibid., 150-154, 157-163.

¹²² Ibid., 154-157, 167-170.

¹²³ Ibid., 155-156.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 148.

Junker toleration and even support made it possible, Baranowski holds, for the NSDAP to become the party of the rural milieu.

The economy, moreover, was as much of a priority for borderlanders in the early 1930s as it was for Germans elsewhere. Even at the best of times, the geographically marginal, thinly settled, industrially and infrastructurally underdeveloped, and agriculture-dependent border regions had lagged behind the rest of the country economically. Upper Silesia, home to the second-largest industrial area after the Ruhr, was the exception. Then, in 1928 grain prices dropped due to worldwide overproduction. Later, the drastic decline in consumer demand for meat and dairy engendered by the Great Depression compounded farmers' plight.¹²⁶ From 1928 onwards, increasing numbers of them could no longer service their debts and the number of foreclosures surged.¹²⁷ In response, farmers imposed illegal and unilateral moratoria on interest and tax payments.¹²⁸ They also called for autarchy, as foreign products were undercutting theirs despite protectionist tariffs. The government reacted: Measures to facilitate debt restructuring and relief for East Elbian agriculture, known as *Osthilfe*, had been in place since 1926¹²⁹ and more were passed in 1931.¹³⁰ Similar aid packages existed for north German farmers too.¹³¹ Many, however, did not use the financial respite to future-proof their businesses but instead ran their businesses in unchanged fashion and counted on continued subsidies.¹³² For its part, Upper Silesia was hit hard by the industrial unemployment crisis of the early 1930s.

Reducing Nazism's success to a response to economic distress has rightly, however, been questioned. After all, the KPD stood to profit from economic suffering

¹²⁶ Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft und Parteipolitik*, 192.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 208-223.

¹²⁹ Helmut Braun, "Osthilfe, 1926-1937," *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns*, accessed July 25, 2021, https://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Osthilfe,_1926-1937.

¹³⁰ Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft und Parteipolitik*, 223.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 225.

too. Furthermore, a contemporary study found that the primary reaction to the economic crisis was not political radicalism at all but “apathy and resignation.”¹³³ Other countries, like the United States, were what’s more at least equally hard hit, yet voters there did not abandon democracy.¹³⁴ Economics were, finally, rarely discussed in isolation. The East Elbian *Oberpräsidenten*, for example, excelled at invoking their provinces’ embattled border location to secure economic aid.¹³⁵ Ordinary borderlanders in Abel’s sample attributed their difficulties finding employment to the economic downturn that came with territorial losses or their politicization to witnessing the economic harm the so-called bleeding borders were doing. An engagement with circumstances beyond the economic on the part of historians therefore remains necessary.

Politicized violence too was hardly unique to the Weimar Republic’s borderlands. Its prevalence between 1930 and 1933 and the resulting “vacuum of order,” if not of power, are key to explaining the demise of the republic, Dirk Blasius has contended.¹³⁶ He concedes that the street fighting of the late Weimar years was not a conventional civil war¹³⁷ and that the number of casualties was low compared to the rate of membership in paramilitary organizations.¹³⁸ As a “category of experience and interpretation,”¹³⁹ however, the “civil war situation” was, he maintained, very real.¹⁴⁰ Bernhard Fulda has been more reluctant to consider Weimar’s last years an actual “civil war situation.” Rather than the violence itself, he has averred, it was the inflation of violence by the (tabloid) press that created the debilitating sense of crisis.¹⁴¹ Whether the threat of civil war was real or imagined, it shaped political decision-making, especially in 1932. With a

¹³³ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 200.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ “Grenzlandsorgen,” *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, August 6, 1932. SHLB.

¹³⁶ “*Ordnungsvakuum*”; Dirk Blasius, *Weimars Ende: Bürgerkrieg und Politik 1930-1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), 12.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³⁹ “Erfahrungs- und Deutungskategorie“; *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ “Bürgerkriegslage“; *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, 173-175, 201-202.

view to pacifying the streets, the *Reich* government in the spring of 1932, for instance, made the choice to ban the SA, an episode that is the at the center of Fulda's analysis and the starting point of Blasius'. The decision prompted calls by the right for the – much less belligerent – Social Democratic *Reichsbanner* to be prohibited too, a request that the minister responsible, the lieutenant general without party affiliation Wilhelm Groener, rejected. He defended the one-sided ban, amid protest from the NSDAP delegates, in a *Reichstag* speech, a defense for which chancellor Brüning in turn defended Groener.¹⁴² In response, the right clamored for the government's resignation. Hindenburg, eager to court the right-wing press after having just run as the republican candidate for president, announced that he would no longer sign the emergency decrees on which Brüning's government relied, forcing it to quit.¹⁴³ Brüning was replaced by the conservative von Papen, who lifted the SA ban¹⁴⁴ and seized a bloody altercation in Altona in mid-July as an excuse to remove a Social Democratic Prussian government from power that he declared unable to contain the spread of violence.¹⁴⁵ The hope for an alliance with the Nazis dissolved, however, after Hitler rejected anything other than the chancellorship during coalition negotiations on August 13 and Hindenburg refused to grant just that for fear of fueling the violence by granting one side such power.¹⁴⁶ For months thereafter, the government tried to figure out how to maintain its authority and public order while unwilling to work with the left and unable to team up with the Nazis.¹⁴⁷ In the end, of course, it offered the chancellorship to Hitler after all. This Nazi ascension to power was not, Blasius submits, the end of civil war but rather the perpetuation of civil war: The state had been taken over by one of the warring parties, which for the next twelve years proceeded to terrorize its opponents.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Ibid., 197.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 197-198.

¹⁴⁴ Blasius, *Weimars Ende*, 48-54.

¹⁴⁵ Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, 199; Blasius, *Weimars Ende*, 68-78.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 100-101.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 96-107, 123-136.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 172.

The violence that occurred in the border regions in the early 1930s needs to be understood partly in this context. The brutal murder of a Polish-speaking Communist sympathizer in Upper Silesian Potempa, for example, which will be treated in detail later, had national ramifications, for Hitler's defense of the murderers showed a countrywide public that Nazism's commitment to legality and democracy were skin-deep.¹⁴⁹ However, in the borderlands violence also stood in another tradition, namely that of the so-called nationalist struggle. The everyday harassment and small-scale violence involved in this struggle persisted throughout the 1920s. In fact, the arguably most notable instance of borderlands violence since the fighting of the immediate post-war years took place when a Polish opera performance in Upper Silesian Oppeln sparked riots in April 1929, before the proliferation of political violence of the early 1930s. The Potempa murder, albeit after the fact, was framed and understood as ethnic violence too. Nationalist violence in the borderlands does not neatly fit the standard chronology of Weimar political violence. While its national context will be taken into account as necessary, political violence that occurred in the borderlands in the early 1930s will therefore in this dissertation primarily be considered against the backdrop of these regions' history of violent nationalist competition. The nationwide radicalization of politics, the economic crisis, and the synergy between Nazism and rural Protestant milieus indubitably powerfully shaped borderlanders' political opinions, but this study aims to contribute an additional layer of insight by investigating the ways in which Nazism engaged with the borderlands qua borderlands.

The archetype of the Eastern German frontier prior to the First World War were the provinces of Posen and West Prussia. Therefore the history of this so-called Prussian Partition constitutes crucial background knowledge for any investigation of German borderlands history, even though of the case studies considered here only the Border Province was an erstwhile partition territory. Germans had settled in Posen and West

¹⁴⁹ Blasius, *Weimars Ende*, 89-96.

Prussia as privileged farmers and entrepreneurs since the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁰ Like the Jews, these settlers formed an affluent minority with special protections, which engendered jealousy. By and large, however, the Polish Commonwealth's inhabitants considered the coexistence of different ethnicities "inevitable and natural."¹⁵¹ By the 18th century, however, the once-mighty Commonwealth was in decline. Between 1772 and 1795 it was partitioned three times by the surrounding Great Powers – Russia, Prussia, and Austria – until there was no independent Polish state left.¹⁵² Only after the Polish uprising of 1830, however, did the Prussian government begin to pursue explicitly Germanizing policies,¹⁵³ giving rise in turn to the beginnings of Polish nationalist grassroots work.¹⁵⁴ Germanizing pressures built under Bismarck, who considered Prussia's Polish-speaking population a threat to the consolidation of the new German nation state¹⁵⁵ and therefore built anti-Polish measures into his *Kulturkampf* against Catholic particularism.¹⁵⁶ Instead of advancing Polish-speakers' Germanization, however, the *Kulturkampf* politicized even the previously apolitical among them.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent bills tried to restrict the use of Polish language use.¹⁵⁸ Poles' landownership, meanwhile, was targeted by the Prussian Settlement Commission, which was tasked with buying up Polish estates and parceling them out to German settler-farmers. This program was intended to reverse unfavorable demographic trends, for Poles had high birth rates while at the same time many Germans were migrating westward in search of industrial jobs.¹⁵⁹ Settlement in the East proved

¹⁵⁰ William Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 1-6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁵⁵ Hans-Erich Volkmann, *Die Polenpolitik des Kaiserreichs: Prolog zum Zeitalter der Weltkriege* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016), 37.

¹⁵⁶ Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 129.

¹⁵⁷ Volkmann, *Die Polenpolitik des Kaiserreichs*, 74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 78-81.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 83; Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 132-134.

unattractive to Germans, though, and the scheme therefore ineffective.¹⁶⁰ All the while, populist Polish politics, fueled by increasing “Germanophobia” among Polish-speakers,¹⁶¹ gained ground.¹⁶²

After a short reprieve following Bismarck’s fall from power, chancellor Bernhard von Bülow in particular reinstated Bismarck’s hard anti-Polish line.¹⁶³ His government, for instance, scrapped Polish-language religious instruction in schools.¹⁶⁴ Its 1908 Association Law additionally banned the use of Polish in public assemblies, though the Progressives successfully pushed through a twenty-year grace period for the most heavily Polish-speaking districts.¹⁶⁵ An Expropriation Law, specifically limited to Polish estates, was also adopted in order to shore up the settlement program.¹⁶⁶ The controversial legislation was not deployed, however, until 1912 and then only on a small scale. Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, faced with a lack of foreign policy successes, felt at that time that he had to comply with parliamentary pressure to make use of the law’s powers.¹⁶⁷ This token implementation of the Expropriation Law was grist on Polish nationalists’ mills and simultaneously galled the German right, which had hoped it would be utilized more widely.¹⁶⁸ This was, after all, the heyday of German nationalist interest groups like the *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein*.¹⁶⁹ It was also Bethmann Hollweg who, due again to political pressure, in the spring of 1914 introduced a bill that would have made the sale or parcellation of land contingent upon the approval of the local *Landrat* and that would additionally have granted the Prussian Settlement Commission veto power over the arrangements for sale of Polish-owned land. The First World War broke out, though,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 147.

¹⁶² Ibid., 143, 149.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 121.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 122; Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 181-183.

¹⁶⁵ Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 191-192.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 189-190.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 199-200.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 190.

¹⁶⁹ Volkmann, *Die Polenpolitik des Kaiserreichs*, 195-209.

before this proposal could pass.¹⁷⁰ These aggressive curtailments of their property rights contributed to the continued flourishing of Polish populism, spearheaded by National Democracy.¹⁷¹

Early on in the First World War, Germany conquered Russian Poland. There, a Polish puppet kingdom was set up in order to incentivize Prussian Poles to support the German war effort and enlist in the army.¹⁷² The kingdom's establishment was ratified by Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.¹⁷³ While pretense was strategically being made abroad at supporting Polish independence, within Germany Poles were repressed more than ever. A promise, given in the militarily difficult days of 1917, to relax language restrictions was broken¹⁷⁴ and the colonization commission furnished with additional funding, even though Germany's financial resources were stretched thin.¹⁷⁵ Propositions to introduce one man, one vote in the Prussian Diet were opposed by Conservatives in part because such reform would have yielded Polish majorities in the Eastern provinces.¹⁷⁶ Even without this harshness, however, Germany's loss of Poles' loyalty was inevitable, for since the failure of the 1863 Polish uprising they had placed their hopes for the resurrection of a Polish state in a shake-up of the European order through a major war.¹⁷⁷ In 1918, the province of Posen duly revolted and joined the new Polish republic.

Being deprived of the partition territories, considered integrally Prussian and then German for a century and a half, was felt as a keen humiliation by Germans, all the more so as the loss did not even eliminate Germany's minority problem.¹⁷⁸ A rump minority

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 204-205.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 237-245.

¹⁷² Ibid., 295-308.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 367.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 385-386.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 380-382.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 382-383.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 392.

¹⁷⁸ Rudolf Jaworski, "Die polnische Grenzminorität in Deutschland 1920-1939," in *Deutsche und Polen zwischen den Kriegen: Minderheitenstatus und "Volkstumskampf" im Grenzgebiet. Amtliche Berichtersattung aus beiden Ländern 1920-1939*, eds. Rudolf Jaworski and Marian Wojciechowski (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1997), 50.

remained.¹⁷⁹ This residual minority was composed mainly of lower-class Polish-speakers, since the better-off moved to Poland.¹⁸⁰ This decapitated Polish milieu was largely apolitical, with Polish parties and the Union of Poles in Germany unfolding wider relevance mainly during election seasons.¹⁸¹ This lack of political organization prevailed even though Poles enjoyed a good legal position in the Weimar Republic. Immediately after the war, the republican government had contemplated pursuing openly repressive minority politics that would have removed many of Poles' legal rights, but in the end it placed its hopes instead in a "soft variant" of gradual assimilation.¹⁸² Minorities' equal rights before the law and their right to the upkeep of their nationality were guaranteed by both the Prussian and federal constitutions.¹⁸³ On the ground, however, German officials were granted considerable leeway in dealing with minorities and instructed to keep a close watch on their doings.¹⁸⁴ The losses of Versailles had left the government apprehensive that minorities might become a potential advance guard for additional claims by neighboring states on German land.¹⁸⁵ The same anxieties about the possibility of further territorial losses underlay the continuation of the settlement program.¹⁸⁶ German policy towards its Polish minority was furthermore influenced by Poland's treatment of its much larger German one, with German measures often intended either as retribution or "conciliatory accommodation" in the face of illiberal Polish handling of ethnic Germans.¹⁸⁷

The Border Province Posen-West Prussia was the heir to the Prussian Partition. The precedent for its establishment was set, Mathias Niendorf recounts, when administrators fled Bromberg during the 1918 Posen Uprising and moved their offices to

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 49-50.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 53-54.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 55-57.

¹⁸² "weiche Variante"; Ibid., 61.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 54.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 61.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 63.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 62.

¹⁸⁷ "konziliantes Entgegenkommen"; Ibid., 62.

the mid-sized town of Schneidemühl, which was to become the provincial capital. Officials conducted their business from there until West Prussia too was definitively handed to Poland in the peace settlement.¹⁸⁸ They then successfully lobbied for the few, non-contiguous remainders of the Partition territories to be preserved as a province of their own. Formally founded in 1922,¹⁸⁹ the province bore a name that consciously foregrounded its character as a mutilated “*Traditionsprovinz*.”¹⁹⁰ This rump province's Polish population was concentrated in three of its nine districts, Meseritz and Bomst in the south and Flatow in the north.¹⁹¹ In the southern two counties, what Polish movement there was had been rendered leaderless by the migration of the affluent to Poland, but Flatow was home to pastor Domanski, the president of the Union of Poles and head of its district branch.¹⁹² It was with attacks on Domanski and his camp that the Nazi party made a name for itself.¹⁹³ Nationalist clashes took off in the province in the early 1930s in particular, when severe economic malaise increased susceptibility to nationalist rallying cries that targeted not only the neighboring Polish state but also the Polish minority within.¹⁹⁴ In 1938, the Border Province was dissolved and merged into the surrounding Prussian provinces for administrative convenience.¹⁹⁵ There is not much work on the Border Province besides Niendorf's. Detlef Mühlberger published a psephological study about the region, which was, however, blind to the border context. Edmund Spevack's early 1990s study of interwar irredentist propaganda in the province, meanwhile, was

¹⁸⁸ Mathias Niendorf, “Die Provinz Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen und ihre polnische Bevölkerung,” in *Deutsche und Polen zwischen den Kriegen: Minderheitenstatus und “Volkstumskampf” im Grenzgebiet. Amtliche Berichtersattung aus beiden Ländern 1920-1939*, eds. Rudolf Jaworski and Marian Wojciechowski (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1997), 454.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 453.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 455.

¹⁹² Ibid., 456.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 454.

¹⁹⁴ Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze: Deutsche und Polen in den Kreisen Flatow (Złotów) und Zempelburg (Sopólno Krajeńskie) 1900-1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 332.

¹⁹⁵ Niendorf, “Die Provinz Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen und ihre polnische Bevölkerung,” 453.

clouded by his anxiety that the newly reunited Germany might once again make similar demands.¹⁹⁶

There are no works dedicated specifically to eastern Pomerania in this period, but robust regional history literatures have developed about the remaining case study regions. Since the scholarship concerning Upper Silesia is deeply interwoven with that on national indifference, that region's history and historiography has been already recounted above. Why national indifference, in contrast, never took hold among Masuria's also Polish-speaking autochthonous population, which came instead to ardently identify as German, is the central question of literature about Masuria. Masurians, it has found, were profoundly loyal to the Hohenzollern monarchy and long considered themselves Polish-speaking Prussians. This self-conception was regarded as unproblematic up until the foundation of the German Empire¹⁹⁷ and few Germanizing measures were instituted before then,¹⁹⁸ though Masuria's Polish vernacular contributed to its image as an uncivilized backwater.¹⁹⁹ After the foundation of a German nation state, however, Germanizing pressures set in.²⁰⁰ Masurians had no alternative loci of identity to turn to. For the devoutly Protestant Masurians, confessional differences posed an insuperable barrier to identification with Catholic Poland. What shadow of a Polish movement existed in the region was run and funded entirely by Polish outsiders from the Prussian Partition and Russian Poland.²⁰¹ A distinct regional identity that, like Upper Silesia's, could serve as a counterpoint to national identities also failed to develop, with nascent efforts to celebrate regional heritage casting the *Heimat* as part of a greater German

¹⁹⁶ Edmund Spevack, "Borderland Nationalism, Westward Migration, and Anti-Polish Aggression: The Grenzmark Posen-Westpreussen, 1919-1938," *East European Quarterly* 30 (1996), 326.

¹⁹⁷ Andreas Kossert, *Preussen, Deutsche oder Polen?: die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 49; for a multilingual model of the state developed by one superindendent serving in Johannsburg, see: *Ibid.*, 45-47; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 41.

¹⁹⁸ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 39-41; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 36-37.

¹⁹⁹ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 34; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 43-44.

²⁰⁰ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 63-68; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 98-99.

²⁰¹ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 58-59.

whole.²⁰² During the First World War, Germanization accelerated further. Shared frontline service and contact with soldiers quartered in the area strengthened Masurians' ties to the German national community.²⁰³ The wider German citizenry, in turn, for the first time took an interest in Masuria, which as the victim of the Russian invasion of 1914/15 was the only region on German soil to see fighting.²⁰⁴

After the war, the Polish delegation to the peace conference at Versailles laid claim to Masuria, despite the native population's German identification.²⁰⁵ The French were prepared to grant Poland the region outright, but the British and Americans insisted on a plebiscite.²⁰⁶ In preparation for the referendum, the *Ostdeutscher Heimatdienst* coordinated a potent, partly Polish-language German propaganda campaign.²⁰⁷ The Polish campaign, meanwhile, depended on outside organizers and funding, like the pre-war Polish movement had done.²⁰⁸ The difference in the two campaigns' resonance is best captured by the discrepancy in their supporter numbers: Whereas the grassroots organization set up by the *Heimatdienst* attracted 171,131 members in 928 branches,²⁰⁹ the Polish equivalent drew “only fourteen Masurians of entirely unknown value” even when it recruited in a prisoner-of-war camp with the promise of early release.²¹⁰ The plebiscite result reflected this imbalance of sympathies, for Germany won 97.8% of the vote, while Poland attained merely 2.2%.²¹¹ With the exception of Soldau and surrounds, Masuria was therefore retained by Germany.²¹² Poland dismissed the referendum's outcome as the product of German terror and of centuries of Germanization, but even

²⁰² Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 87-91, 93; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 59-61.

²⁰³ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 134.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

²⁰⁵ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 145; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 117-118, 122.

²⁰⁶ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 124.

²⁰⁷ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 147-149; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 130-132.

²⁰⁸ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 146-148.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 187; Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 157.

²¹² Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

under the liberal Weimar Republic the Polish national movement did not take off.²¹³ Germany, on the other hand, celebrated its victory, which, having come at a time when the country was in profound crisis, was extolled as demonstrating that Masurians' attachment to Germany was genuine and exceptionally steadfast, not merely opportunistic.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, the durability of Masurians' national identification continued to worry German officials and activists as long as linguistic assimilation had not been achieved.²¹⁵ Therefore, Germanizing initiatives continued to be pursued²¹⁶ and any definition of the Masurians as a minority vehemently opposed, due to the protections that came with that classification.²¹⁷

Masurians themselves in the early years of the republic saw in Hindenburg the best replacement for the monarchs they had revered and therefore supported the DNVP.²¹⁸ Plagued by poverty and embittered that economic aid to East Prussia did not reach them, they, however, soon grew disenchanted with the republic, in whose government the DNVP had on occasion participated.²¹⁹ Hitler and his Nazi party filled the resulting vacuum, garnering vote shares as high as 70.6% in some counties in 1932.²²⁰ Once in power, the Nazis' infrastructure and agricultural improvement projects gave rise to an unprecedented economic boom and consequently the Third Reich's peacetime years came to be remembered as Masuria's golden age.²²¹ The Nazi government too, however, expressed frustration with the persistence of the Polish vernacular, even at NSDAP party meetings,²²² and therefore ran Germanization programs very akin to those of preceding governments.²²³

²¹³ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 191-196.

²¹⁴ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 160.

²¹⁵ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 218, 234.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-235; Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 200-201.

²¹⁷ Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 232-234.

²¹⁸ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 182, 184.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

²²⁰ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 189; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 255.

²²¹ Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?*, 231-232.

²²² *Ibid.*, 235-243.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 238, 244-246; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 264.

Schleswig-Holstein followed a path to Nazism very different from that of its fellow borderland regions in the East. For centuries, the two duchies had been governed in personal union by the Danish monarchs but had also maintained close ties to the German cultural and economic sphere. Once competing nationalist movements took root in the 19th century, they advocated for the full incorporation of the duchies into the Danish and Prussian states respectively. In 1864, Bismarck's military victory over Denmark settled the matter. Before the First World War, the electorate of the new Prussian province embraced the liberal opposition, whose nationalism, agriculture-friendly free-trade policies, and hostility toward the conservative Prussian establishment it endorsed.²²⁴ Accordingly, in the first post-war elections in 1919 the Wilhelmine opposition parties, namely the Social Democrats, the German Democratic Party, and the regional *Landespartei*, together garnered over 80% of votes.²²⁵ A shift to the right, however, soon occurred, with the DNVP winning vote shares as high as in the Eastern Prussian provinces.²²⁶ The nationalist fervor underlying this development was generated in part by the plebiscite held in Schleswig in 1920, which the peace settlement had mandated at the request of Danish nationalist activists and politicians, even though Denmark had not been a combatant country.²²⁷ In the lead-up to the vote, all German parties defended the indivisibility of Schleswig and supported the German campaign, but the chief organizing committee thereof nevertheless from the beginning linked its protests against the threat to Schleswig to "its aversions against the new government."²²⁸ For the referendum, Schleswig was divided into two zones, the northern one of which voted in February, while the southern one did so in March. The first zone, where about 75% had

²²⁴ Rudolf Heberle, *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus: Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918 bis 1932* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 27-29.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

²²⁷ Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg*, 108-109.

²²⁸ " seinen Aversionen gegen die neue Regierung"; Rudolf Rietzler, "*Kampf in der Nordmark*": *Das Aufkommen des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1982), 113.

cast their ballots for Denmark, Germany lost, but it retained the second, where over 80% voted German.²²⁹ Whereas Southern Schleswig's upholding of its Germandom and the sense of *Volksgemeinschaft* of the plebiscite period came to be remembered fondly, the loss of North Schleswig was deeply resented.²³⁰

The border alteration inspired grievances partly because of the detrimental economic impact it had in particular on Flensburg, which lost its hinterland.²³¹ It was the further economic distress caused by the agricultural crisis of the late 1920s that ignited the notorious *Landvolkbewegung*, which from 1928 committed acts of civil disobedience protesting the measures imposed by the government and by the banks on insolvent indebted farmers. A radical wing of the movement eventually began carrying out terroristic attacks, which led many former supporters, including the NSDAP, to distance themselves from it.²³² Following the collapse of the *Landvolkbewegung* about a year after it took off, most of its adherents joined the NSDAP.²³³ By that time, the NSDAP was more generally prospering in Schleswig-Holstein, winning more votes there than anywhere else in the country. In July 1932, the province became the only electoral district ever to return a majority for the NSDAP in a free election.

Schleswig-Holstein's embrace of Nazism soon spurred first attempts at explanation. Already in 1934 Rudolf Heberle wrote a sociological monograph examining the relationship between the province's rural population and the Nazi movement, though it was only published much later. More recently, scholars, particularly those around the *Arbeitskreis zur Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein e.V.*, have produced a wealth of scholarship about Nazism, including its roots, in the region. Edited volumes have been a favorite format: *Schleswig-Holstein 1800 bis heute: Eine*

²²⁹ Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg*, 111.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 113-116.

²³² Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe, *Schleswig-Holstein und der Nationalsozialismus* (Kiel: Wachholtz, 2005), 12-13; Uwe Danker and Utz Schliesky, *Schleswig-Holstein 1800 bis heute: Eine historische Landeskunde* (Husum: Husum Druck- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014), 212-221.

²³³ Heberle, *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus*, 156-160.

historische Landeskunde by editors Uwe Danker and Utz Schliesky, *Schleswig-Holstein und der Nationalsozialismus* by editors Uwe Danker and Astrid Schwabe, and earlier “*Wir bauen das Reich*”: *Aufstieg und erste Herrschaftsjahre des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein* by editors Erich Hoffmann and Peter Wulf all compiled insightful pieces. Gerhard Paul in his *Landunter: Schleswig-Holstein und das Hakenkreuz* single-handedly contributed a wealth of vignettes. The particularly early rise of Nazism in Dithmarschen, a set of two counties in Holstein and therefore outside the immediate border area, is remarked on in all the literature about Schleswig-Holstein, though few pieces are dedicated specifically to the phenomenon. Frank Omland’s chapter “Dithmarschen und der Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus” is an exception. However, the volume in which it appeared, like much of the literature about Schleswig-Holstein, is written for the general public and does without citations. Neither in these general interest books nor in the scientific monographs is the new, contested border considered in relation to Nazism’s rise. The exception are a few older works like Rudolf Rietzler’s 1982 *Kampf in der Nordmark: Das Aufkommen des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein 1919-1928* and Peter Heinacher’s 1986 *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg (1919-1933)*. This paucity of substantive engagement with borderland conditions in scholarship about Nazism in Schleswig-Holstein persists even though counties in the province’s north, including Südtondern and Schleswig, eventually became regional Nazi bastions.²³⁴

The history and politics of Schleswig-Holstein and of the other case study regions were evidently shaped by their closeness to contested borders. Yet the neighboring ethnic German territories have always loomed larger in the public consciousness.²³⁵ What narratives about Germany’s borderlands qua borderlands do exist, meanwhile, have rarely treated the Weimar era, aside from the period of plebiscitary and military struggles at its

²³⁴ Danker und Schliesky, *Schleswig-Holstein 1800 bis heute*, 228.

²³⁵ See, for instance: Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland 1918-1939* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993).

start. Considered more often in light of their Protestantism, rural character, and economic distress, the regions' borderland location has seldom informed examinations of their Weimar-era politics and of the in many cases precipitous ascent of Nazism there. Some, in fact, deem investigations of the influence of border proximity on politics unwarranted. Richard Bessel, for instance, has relied on the assumption that the German East was not differentiated from the rest of Germany by its vicinity to the borders in his *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism* in order to be able to employ it as a representative case study from which to draw conclusions about the ascent of Nazism across the country.²³⁶ The same issues as elsewhere, he claimed, dominated politics there and, he contended, even discourses concerning the border and its effects, which one might think shaped politics in the Eastern border regions in particular, were neither more salient nor more preponderant in these areas than in the rest of Germany.²³⁷ Bolko Janus' dissertation about Upper Silesia has likewise asserted that, despite the nearby border and the recent history of violence, "Overall, the level and character of hypernationalism in Upper Silesia was indistinguishable from hypernationalism in the rest of Germany."²³⁸ Hypernationalism, Janus stressed, was strongest in Upper Silesia's north and west, the parts of the region that were both most ethnically German and farthest away from the border.²³⁹ Brendan Karch too has maintained that the province's proximity to the border and its ethnic multiplicity did not shape voter behavior. In contrast to Janus' emphasis on the NSDAP's strength in Upper Silesia's most German counties, however, Karch arrived at this conclusion precisely because Polish-speakers too voted for that party.²⁴⁰ Since Nazis' anti-Polish propaganda consisted of vague generalities, it was not perceived as truly menacing, Karch held, and Upper Silesians of all backgrounds could therefore turn

²³⁶ Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 4.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-12.

²³⁸ Janus, *Germans and Poles*, 339.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 328-335.

²⁴⁰ Brendan Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 181.

to the Nazi party as an outlet for protest voting.²⁴¹ Ethnicity was thus irrelevant to politics.

This conclusion of Karch's that the support of some Polish-speakers for the Nazi party renders the matter of the border and of ethnicity irrelevant to the study of voting behavior in Weimar-era Upper Silesia is, however, something of a jump. Janus' assertion, meanwhile, that radical nationalism in Upper Silesia was no different from that elsewhere is belied by some of his dissertation's preceding parts. These chronicle the role of former *Freikorps* fighters in the regional Nazi movement,²⁴² the party's rhetoric and actions targeting Poles or the border, and, on the other hand,²⁴³ the membership in the NSDAP of individuals from autochthonous, Polish-speaking backgrounds.²⁴⁴ Bessel's book, for its part, does devote a chapter to the Nazis' participation in the Eastern borderlands' *Reichswehr*-sponsored *Grenzschutz* units. An article of his furthermore remains the best on the above-mentioned Potempa murder.²⁴⁵ Shelley Baranowski mentions instances when the NSDAP attacked the DNVP²⁴⁶ or the government for supposedly granting Poles preferential treatment.²⁴⁷ She, like Bessel, Karch, and Janus, does not let the borderland-specific rhetoric and behaviors she encountered inform her narrative, but exist they clearly did.

This study therefore sets out to illuminate the interplay, heretofore sidelined, between the ascendant Nazi movement and the concerns, experiences, and conditions of contested borderlands. It opens with a discussion of how Nazi activists connected their political trajectory with reportedly formative experiences of the German frontiers before, during, and after the First World War. The second chapter goes on to demonstrate how the Nazis colonized the commemoration of post-war contention over the German borders

²⁴¹ Ibid., 180-181.

²⁴² Janus, *Germans and Poles*, 158-164.

²⁴³ Ibid., 296-306.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 292.

²⁴⁵ Richard Bessel, "The Potempa Murder," *Central European History* 10 (1977).

²⁴⁶ Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life*, 159.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 174.

in order to attach to their movement the prestige associated with frontier defense. Chapter three surveys the other themes and methods of borderland-specific publicity. The fourth chapter looks more closely at the kinds of claims Nazi propaganda in border regions made about the relationship between race and nation. By examining this question within the setting of Germany's own long-standing border areas, the chapter contributes a new perspective to a literature that has considered the tensions between Nazi racial thought on the one hand and, on the other, the in reality more complex relationship between ethnicity and nationality on the ground primarily in the context of the Third Reich's wartime occupation of Eastern Europe. The nationalist nature of political violence in the borderlands and the associated narrative that the Nazi movement was the best protector of regions where Germandom was under threat are the focus of the following chapter. The sixth chapter is devoted to interactions between borderland Nazism and the central and regional governments as well as between the movement and the established right. It concentrates on the critiques Nazis levelled at both for their handling of the borderlands' situation, while also reviewing Nazis' collaboration with the rest of the far right on border matters. The final chapter explores the reception of Nazism's borderland activism by non-Germans and by ethnic Germans across the border. It highlights how Nazis' conduct played into the hands of the formers' opportunistic denunciations of all Germans as oppressive in their nationalism, while achieving only a mixed reception among the latter. Negotiation of the concerns and resentments of those for whom Germany's postwar territorial losses and ethnic multiplicity were daily lived realities was, it emerges, a substantial part of burgeoning Nazism in the country's much-contested borderlands.

The Post-War in the Borderlands

While during the Weimar Republic's last years the National Socialist movement often achieved prodigious electoral successes and certainly pronounced visibility in Germany's contested borderlands, it constituted, there as elsewhere, only a small if vocal minority during the years immediately following the upheavals surrounding the post-war territorial settlement. Nevertheless, the experience of those turbulences, as well as of anxiety about the borderlands' situation before and during the war, reportedly laid the foundations for borderland residents' later embrace of Nazism, even if their political trajectory did not lead them directly to that party when it was still at the political fringe. Valuable work exists chronicling the ties between post-war paramilitary groups, which were based in the borderlands or came there to participate in armed border conflicts, and the Nazi party. The role individual paramilitary leaders, including borderland locals, took on in the party has been touched on too. Going beyond this focus on the paramilitaries and their commanders, this chapter draws on egodocuments, first and foremost American sociologist Theodore Abel's collection of autobiographical sketches, to illuminate rank-and-file Nazis' engagement with the borderlands' condition. Many cited pre-war national tensions, wartime realizations of Germany's vulnerability, and the fears, sufferings, and joys of plebs, armed struggle, and expulsion in their responses to Abel's prompt of "Why I Became a Nazi." This pattern indicates that these circumstances shaped respondents' political views and development, or at least had become an internalized justificatory narrative. In contrast to the more official, impersonal sources on which subsequent chapters will have to rely, the egodocuments employed here permit the investigation of border experiences' connection with Nazism not just at an earlier time but on the individual level.

The Nazi movement's intertwinement with the paramilitary scene, which had sprung up in opposition not only to the revolution but also to the looming territorial losses, is well-known. One of the environments where this enmeshment was particularly

germane was in the border regions where the *Freikorps* had fought. On the national level, many leadership figures, such as Heinrich Himmler, Ernst Röhm, and Martin Bormann, had in those years been members of *Freikorps* and Rudolf Höss¹ and Kurt Daluege, a native Upper Silesian, had fought in Upper Silesia.² Many other participants in the fighting also attained official posts in the Third Reich.³ This identification of the NSDAP with the aims and ideology of the *Freikorps* was even officially celebrated in a ceremony in Munich on the tenth anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch.⁴ For Upper Silesia specifically, a 1976 monograph about the German *Freikorps* in the region documented paramilitary veterans' role as the "avantgarde of fascism" in the region.⁵ In the work, Franciszek Biały describes how several *Freikorps* leaders soon after its establishment in August 1921 agreed to put their troops under the command of the SA, which until the spring of 1923 was headed by a veteran of the Ehrhardt Brigade's participation in the Upper Silesian fighting. Most prominent among these *Freikorps* commanders was Gerhard Rossbach, who was recruited to the NSDAP in the summer of 1922 alongside Edmund Heines, the later SA leader for Silesia, Heinz Hauenstein, and Peter von Heydebreck, the hero of St Anne Mountain. Rossbach and Hauenstein in particular took responsibility for building up the Nazi movement in Silesia and outside Bavaria more generally. Urging strength in unity, Hauenstein ordered his *Freikorps* to join the Nazi movement.⁶ Rossbach in an analogous speech to his adherents declared, "Four days ago I was in Upper Silesia. I can assure you here in Bavaria that soon we will make the most backward part of Upper Silesia a small Bavaria [in the sense of making it National Socialist].... It is a vital necessity to form a unified powerful organization, which would

¹ "Rudolf Höß 1901-1947," Lebendiges Museum Online, accessed September 3, 2019, <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/biografie/biografie-rudolf-hoess.html>.

² "Kurt Daluege 1897-1946," Lebendiges Museum Online, accessed June 11, 2020, <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/biografie/kurt-daluege>.

³ Franciszek Biały, *Niemieckie Ochotnicze Formacje Zbrojne Na Śląsku w Latach 1918-1923* (Katowice: Śląski Instytut Naukowy, 1976), 184-202.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵ "Awangarda faszystu"; *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

finally make order in today's nonsense, from this tangle of numerous nationalist groups and unions competing with each other. Germans need strong leadership again.”⁷ In this spirit, Rossbach, Hauenstein, and Schlageter, a high-ranking member of Hauenstein's corps, set about establishing branches of the NSDAP and, when that was banned, the *Großdeutsche Arbeiterpartei* first in Berlin and then across Upper Silesia's industrial district. By the end of 1922, branches of the latter party operated in Gleiwitz, Hindenburg, Beuthen, Cosel, Kandrzin, Rosenberg, Kreuzburg, and Oppeln. In Hindenburg and Kreuzburg the chairmen and deputies were *Freikorps* members and in Gleiwitz the seconds-in-command were *Selbstschutz* veterans.⁸ The branches' memberships too consisted largely of *Freikorps* men, Biały repeatedly alleged. Rossbach, however, went to prison in early 1923 for masterminding a plot to overthrow the republican government and captain Eberhardt, his deputy in Upper Silesia, showed little initiative, leaving the aforementioned Peter von Heydebreck free to establish rival counterrevolutionary *Freischar* units. These he sought to integrate into the, within this scene, increasingly powerful NSDAP, but he was initially rebuffed by Göring, who informed him that the party leadership was concentrating on Bavaria for now. He met with more understanding, however, from Göring's second-in-command, a veteran of the Ehrhardt brigade, and thus Heydebreck's *Freischar* bands were subordinated to the Nazi party after all.⁹ Heydebreck's ambition to unite all paramilitary groups in Upper Silesia under his command, however, was resisted by Alfred Mildner, the head of the powerful *Bund Oberland* there.¹⁰ In the end, however, Heydebreck appears to have won the struggle for influence, for it was he, rather than Mildner, who was put in charge of the

⁷ “Przed czterema dniami byłem na Górnym Śląsku. Mogę was tutaj w Bawarii zapewnić, że niebawem uczynimy z najbardziej zacofanej części Górnego Śląska małą Bawarię...Koniecznością życiową jest, aby z tego kłębowiska licznych rywalizujących ze sobą nacjonalistycznych grup i związków utworzyć jednolitą potężną organizację, która zrobiłaby wreszcie porządek z tym dzisiejszym nonsensem. Niemcy potrzebują znowu silnej władzy.”; *Ibid.*, 143-144.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

paramilitary formations meant to carry out the Beer Hall Putsch in Upper Silesia, though the coup was defeated before they ever received the signal to act.¹¹ In this failure's wake, Heydebreck left the region to help Ernst Röhm set up the *Frontbann*, a substitute organization for the now-prohibited SA.¹² In 1925, when the ban on the organization had been lifted, he re-founded the Upper Silesian SA¹³ and after the Nazis' take-over of power Heydebreck became the leader of the SA group Pomerania. He had an Upper Silesian village named for him, which retained this designation even after he was murdered in the Night of Long Knives. Other native participants of the conflict of 1921 took up positions at the provincial or local level during the Third Reich. Most prominently, Helmuth Brückner became the *Gauleiter* for Silesia and was provisionally responsible for Upper Silesia too. His deputy and simultaneously the police president for Breslau was Edmund Heines of the *Freikorps Roßbach*. Josef Adamczyk, a *Freikorps* fighter from Upper Silesia's heavily Polish Rybnik district and prominent Nazi agitator during the Weimar years, became the *Landeshauptmann* for Upper Silesia, from 1939 to 1941 that of the united province Silesia, and finally of Lower Silesia. Max Fillusch, who had fought in 1921 after having been discharged from the army in 1918 as wounded, became the founder of Upper Silesia's first SA unit and later the mayor of the important industrial town of Zabrze. Hans Ramshorn, the SA leader for Breslau during the early 1930s, attained the post of police chief of Gleiwitz, another major industrial town.¹⁴ Bolko Janus likewise enumerates regionally high-profile Nazi officials who had fought in the *Freikorps*. Beyond those already mentioned, he includes Johann Harnys, the region's

¹¹ Ibid., 168.

¹² Ibid., 171.

¹³ Juliane Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien: Der Kampf um die Erinnerung in Deutschland und in Polen 1919-1956* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2008), 155; see also: Bolko Janus, *Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933* (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 163-164.

¹⁴ Biały, *Niemieckie Ochotnicze Formacje Zbrojne Na Śląsku*, 181.

later SS chief, and Oppeln's police chief after the Nazi seizure of power, Wilhelm Metz.¹⁵

Scholarship on other regions too makes mention of Nazi groups' and leaders' roots in the post-war struggle against border alterations. Bogusław Drewniak's study of the Weimar-era Nazi movement in Pomerania, for instance, notes that *Freikorps* veterans living on neighboring estates would often band together to form an NSDAP branch, becoming some of the party's earliest members and propagandists in the region.¹⁶ Hinrich Lohse, Schleswig-Holstein's *Gauleiter*, for his part, got his first taste of politics in the plebiscite-era *Landespartei*.¹⁷ In the establishment of NSDAP and SA branches in his *Gau*'s northernmost city Flensburg, Peter Heinacher has detailed, the *Germania* youth group, which brought together former youthful plebiscite campaigners, played a vital part.¹⁸

As the examples of this youth group and the Pomeranian *Freikorps* fighters-turned-farm laborers hint at, not only prominent Nazi cadres but also small-time activists looked back on a paramilitary past. Using previously little explored party *Stammbücher* kept during the Third Reich about officeholders in the local branches of the party and of its affiliate organizations, Upper Silesian historian Mirosław Węcki probed what these activists' paramilitary experience was and how they framed it. Service at the front, he points out, does not distinguish Upper Silesian Nazis from their party comrades elsewhere in Germany, nor, in fact, from Germans of other political convictions. In contrast to Upper Silesians, however, soldiers from most other parts of Germany did not

¹⁵ Bolko Janus, "Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933" (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 163-164.

¹⁶ Bogusław Drewniak, *Początki Ruchu Hitlerowskiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim, 1923-1934* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1962), 34.

¹⁷ "Lohse, Hinrich", Deutsche Biographie, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz54110.html>; for more information about Lohse, see also Uwe Danker's forthcoming *Hinrich Lohse – eine wissenschaftliche Biografie des schleswig-holsteinischen NSDAP-Gauleiters und Oberpräsidenten*

¹⁸ Peter Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg* (Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte e.V., 1986), 244-261.

return home to plebiscite and insurgency and, in contrast to Nazis and their far-right ilk, Germans of differing political bents did not generally patronize the paramilitaries that had sprung up in response thereto.¹⁹ Nazis were thus free to invoke their participation in these paramilitary formations as nationalist credentials that justified their admission to and promotion within the party. This legitimizing function was particularly relevant for those who had been too young to serve at the front. Both the already-mentioned Josef Adamczyk and *Kreisleiter* Johann Schweter, for instance, had hence been just barely too young to fight in the war. They had, however, secured the expected nationalist record by fighting in 1921.²⁰ Other Nazi officials too routinely mentioned their paramilitary past, with some recounting fighting the Polish insurgency despite severe wartime injuries. One official in the National Socialist People's Welfare, for instance, had fought in East Prussia in 1914, before being severely wounded while fighting the Russians in Hungary's Carpathian Mountains. Having been taken to a Russian field hospital and then to Siberia, he spent over six years as a prisoner of war before returning to Germany by boat from Vladivostok. Just home and 30% disabled due to his injuries and a bout of malaria contracted in Siberia, he nevertheless took part in the combat against the insurgency and earned the Silesian Eagle II Class.²¹

Contemporaries themselves often considered Upper Silesia's Nazi movement a dangerous hold-over from the plebiscite period. "Upper Silesia with its strong national contrasts, with its unrest through occupation, insurgencies and partition for a long time has seemed to the National Socialists a particularly favorable arena," the regional Social Democratic *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt* wrote in December 1922. "Under the mask of the *Selbstschutz* all sorts of dubious folks were brought there. Erhard [sic] and Roßbach have demonstrably good connections there. Cudgel Kunze's agitation could unite 23 000

¹⁹ Mirosław Węcki, "Losy górnośląskich nazistów podczas I wojny światowej," in *Górny Śląsk a I wojna światowa*, eds. Jarosław Racięski and Michał J. Witkowski (Katowice: Muzeum Śląskie, 2016), 179-180.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 180-181.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

votes behind him. There is indubitably the intention to make Upper Silesia a particular hearth of the National Socialist movement,” the paper continued.²² The *Vossische Zeitung* published a similar warning the following month. The vulnerable borderland, it held, required peace and quiet to recover from recent years’ unrest and to tackle border-related issues effectively, but the Nazi movement, which sought to turn Upper Silesia into “a colony of a movement thus far centralized in Bavaria,” stood in the way of such tranquility. The core of this troublesome party’s membership was formed by erstwhile *Selbstschutz* men, the daily alleged, re-organized into Nazi paramilitaries and housed and employed by the region’s industrialists and large landowners. While the Nazi movement had not as yet, the *Vossische* conceded, amassed much strength, the paper worried it soon might, for already over 300 Nazis had recently marched in Beuthen.²³ The Polish *Zgoda* too complained that Nazis, who had been able to remain in Upper Silesia long beyond the cessation of paramilitary operations thanks to funding from secret organizations, were behind the increasingly frequent reports of violent assaults on the region’s Polish population. Pointing up widespread sympathy for Nazism among police officers, who consequently failed to intervene against its excesses, the *Zgoda* called for the higher police authorities to expel negligent policemen from the force and Nazi “pests” from the region.²⁴ A February 1923 letter from a local official to the *Regierungspräsident* resonated with that suggestion. Small groups of Nazis had on two separate occasions entered a hotel and a café respectively in order to harass Jewish patrons, the letter reported. These incidents had contributed to the dissolution of the *Großdeutsche*

²² “Oberschlesien mit seinen starken national Gegensätzen, mit seiner Unruhe durch Besetzung, Aufstände und Abtrennungen scheint den Nationalsozialisten seit langem als ein besonders günstiges Feld. Unter der Maske des Selbstschutzes wurde allerhand zweifelhaftes Volk dorthin gebracht. Erhard und Roßbach haben nachgewiesenermaßen dort gute Verbindungen. Knüppel-Kunzes Agitation konnte 23 000 Stimmen auf sich vereinigen. Es besteht zweifellos die Absicht Oberschlesien zu einem besonderen Herd der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung zu machen.”; “Die Faszisten in Oberschlesien,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, December 23, 1922. APO, NPO, 989.

²³ “eine Kolonie der bisher in Bayern zentralisiert gewesenen Bewegung”; “Nationalsozialismus in Oberschlesien,” *Vossische Zeitung*, January 9, 1923. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 421.

²⁴ “Schädlinge”; “Die Orgeschplage. Nächtliche Übergriffe der Hakenkreuzler.” (copy), January 9, 1923. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 728.

Arbeiterpartei by the *Oberpräsident*, the message concluded, and had sparked efforts to expel from Upper Silesia those who ostensibly sojourned there for its protection from further Polish aggressions but who really brought it only continued unrest.²⁵ This theme of far-right troublemakers who stayed on in Upper Silesia financed and fed by shadowy capitalists is taken up by Biały in particular, whose work is shaped by the communist biases of 1970s Poland.

While the sources discussed until now elucidate the absorption of active post-war militants into the NSDAP, egodocuments like Abel's can illuminate how borderland experiences informed the *Weltanschauung* of those whose paths to the party were more round-about. The American sociologist invited party members, who had joined prior to 1933, to submit "accurate and detailed descriptions of their personal lives, particularly after World War I" to the essay contest he had organized specially. The best entries were awarded cash prizes worth 400 marks in total. "Special attention," Abel enjoined, "should be given to accounts of family life, education, economic conditions, membership in associations, participation in the Hitler movement, and important experiences, thoughts, and feelings about events and ideas of the post-war period."²⁶ Held in cooperation with the NSDAP, which circulated Abel's announcement to all its branches and through the party press, the competition garnered 683 entries, ranging from sparse autobiographies less than a page long to detailed vitae that run on for tens of pages.²⁷ Around a hundred of these so-called biograms were confiscated by the FBI in 1943 "in search for evidence against some persons on their list'," Abel informed the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, where the documents are housed.²⁸ In 1952, both he and a staff member of the

²⁵ Letter to the Ministry of the Interior, February 15, 1923. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 421.

²⁶ "Newly Digitized Nazi Biograms Now Available," Hoover Institution, accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.hoover.org/news/newly-digitized-nazi-biograms-now-available>.

²⁷ Theodore Abel, *The Nazi Movement: Why Hitler Came to Power* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), 4.

²⁸ Sarah Patton, E-mail to the author, June 10, 2020; see also: Peter Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 63.

archive contacted the FBI about the return of the missing stories, but the FBI informed them that none of the documents “were maintained in their files.”²⁹

The sizable collection that does remain is as an invaluable yet underused source, which only Abel himself and political scientist Peter Merkl have published on. Abel’s 1938 *The Nazi Movement: Why Hitler Came to Power* identified four principal, interdependent factors that, judging by the biograms, fueled Nazism’s success: widespread discontent with the Weimar Republic, the appeal of Nazi ideology and particularly of its emphasis on community, an aura of efficaciousness, and, of course, Hitler’s charismatic leadership.³⁰ This multicausal, primary source-based model he developed in opposition to then-prevailing unsubstantiated psychoanalytic³¹ and Marxist interpretations of Nazism.³² Merkl’s *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis*, meanwhile, was published in 1975 and takes a statistical approach to the biograms’ evaluation. Not, in fact, primarily concerned with political violence, Merkl assigns tags – from age, locality, and confession to thematic ones like primary object of enmity or main ideological theme – to the texts and proceeds to analyze the correlations between them. Simplistic and reductive, this method obscures the narratives’ multifacetedness. If, for example, a respondent expressed hostility towards both Marxists and Jews only one of those groups would be tagged as his foremost target of hatred, ignoring his other antipathy and any connections between them. Such flattening of the biograms robs Merkl’s calculations of meaning, as becomes particularly clear whenever he quotes from the texts at any length. The multiplicity of factors and feelings that feature in them belies the simple correlations quotes are meant to illustrate.

Both Merkl and Abel address the weaknesses of the collection itself, with respondents’ trustworthiness the primary concern. After all, contestants were writing not

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Abel, *The Nazi Movement*, 166-183.

³¹ Ibid., 187.

³² Ibid., 199.

only with hindsight but presumably also with a view to showing themselves and their movement in a flattering light.³³ They may also, as some indeed admitted, have submitted vitae with their American audience specifically in mind.³⁴ Yet, Abel, who for all his disagreement with them generally presumes his respondents' sincerity, points out that they felt proud of their movement and of their actions and self-righteous about their views.³⁵ They felt no need to hide even violence or anti-Semitism; to the contrary, many biographies brim with them. In 1934, pride was not yet dimmed by the war's outcome. Abel and Merkl both conclude that while individual respondents may have omitted unsavory events, by and large the collection represents the Nazi movement's brutality and prejudices accurately. What they do find is that the respondents are not representative of the Nazi party. Essay contests necessarily exclude the functionally illiterate and those lacking confidence in their writing skills.³⁶ Civil servants, well-educated and comfortable writing, conversely make up a larger percentage of respondents than their share in the party.³⁷ Those early converts who joined the party before the watershed 1930 *Reichstag* election are also disproportionately numerous in the collection.³⁸ Furthermore, some regions and, due to more or less forceful advertising of the contest, branches were likewise overrepresented.³⁹ Among the regions in whose favor the geographical distribution is skewed are the territories once occupied by the French and the Belgians and Germany's Eastern borderlands, which together, Merkl notes, account for over a third of responses.⁴⁰ While Merkl's definition of borderlands is broad and includes entire *Gaue*, the Abel collection does, thanks to this overrepresentation, provide a wealth of testimonies about Nazis' borderlands experiences.

³³ Ibid., 6-7; Merkl, *Political Violence*, 8.

³⁴ Merkl, *Political Violence*, 7.

³⁵ Abel, *The Nazi Movement*, 7; Merkl, *Political Violence*, 8.

³⁶ Merkl, *Political Violence*, 6.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Ibid., 12.

³⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17-18.

To be sure, for many of these borderlands respondents, the accident of locality played no part in the story they told about themselves and they focused instead on, for example, their opposition to Marxism or their economic woes. For others, by contrast, their borderlands background formed a core part of their narrative, starting with their family histories. Three men claimed that their families had arrived in the East centuries ago, helping to settle and cultivate it. Erich Hinz's ancestors, on both sides of the family, had reportedly come to the Province of Posen from Brandenburg during the reign of Frederick the Great.⁴¹ At around the same time, Schoepke's forebears had settled in "the empty Eastern space" that was by the 1930s the corner between the Border Province, Brandenburg, and Pomerania.⁴² Helmut Mateske's forefathers, meanwhile, had arrived in the Border Province even before that, as Bohemian Brethren who had fled to Poland rather than fight against fellow Protestants in the Schmalkaldic War. There, they had subdued the swampy land with the plow.⁴³ Those whose families arrived in the East far more recently, as part of early 20th-century settlement schemes, took no less pride in their contribution. Gustav Bemeiker's family had come to the region around Tilsit before his birth, yet he too identified deeply as a settler.⁴⁴ Willy Unger's family moved to a farm in the Province of Posen shortly after his birth in 1901⁴⁵ and Willi Scharf's likewise relocated there in 1908, when he was just four.⁴⁶ Walter Treue's family too had moved to

⁴¹ Erich Hinz, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58581/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlhin?ctx=df23c12d-71e7-4393-86eb-376cfbdd091a&idx=0>.

⁴² "in den leeren Ostraum"; Schoepke, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=e95033d1-115d-4de2-9201-ef07ad5977ef&idx=0>.

⁴³ Helmut Mateske, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58677/helmut-span-classqueryhlmateskespan?ctx=5ccc5c78-3812-4493-b281-48d12a170f85&idx=0>.

⁴⁴ Gustav Bemeiker, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58586/span-classqueryhlgustavspan-span-classqueryhlbe?ctx=865c4b35-4d33-45ee-b823-ef1225121c83&idx=0>.

⁴⁵ Willy Unger, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58743/span-classqueryhlyspan-span-classqueryhlung?ctx=44055d56-a17a-43fd-b959-d45b347f19e9&idx=0>.

⁴⁶ Willi Scharf, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58655/span-classqueryhlwillispan-span-classqueryhlsch?ctx=ce423b6c-54fc-455f-aff2-1c1d590ffda9&idx=0>.

West Prussia in 1904 when he was only a few months old. About the ensuing time he wrote that, “Now years of hardest work began for my parents, as the uncultivated ground first had to be made productive and at home bitter poverty often reigned.”⁴⁷ These men’s understanding of the frontier was rooted in a sense that they, Germans, had settled the East and made it productive, earning the rights to these regions by their toil.

The question of ownership of border regions had engendered, some biograms claimed, sometimes violent hostility already before the First World War. Growing up in a poor family in West Prussia that spoke a local Low German, Max Schmidt, for example, had learned to regard the estates’ Polish-speaking carriage drivers and their children as “foreigners.”⁴⁸ One unnamed respondent, meanwhile, came from Saxony, but his father had, as a “border German” from an area that had since come under Polish rule, become acquainted in his youth in the 1870s with the “nationality and border struggle,” which already then “ragged” between Germans and Poles “quite strongly.” Made a “fanatical nationalist” by this experience, the father raised his son in that spirit.⁴⁹ On the Austrian empire’s internal German-Czech frontier, Raimund Mayer too had encountered nationalist conflict. Even as a child, he recalled, he knew “the fight, which we borderland Germans in the old monarchy already had to fight for our Germandom.”⁵⁰ “Maintaining

⁴⁷ “Nun begannen für meine Eltern Jahre härtester Arbeit, galt es doch unkultivierten Boden erst mal ertragfähig zu machen und es hat oft bitterste Not im Hause geherrscht.”; Walter Treue, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58538/span-classqueryhlwaltersspan-span-classqueryhltr?ctx=c36d008d-f6b5-49cc-96b5-bf0fe22fa212&idx=0>.

⁴⁸ “Ausländer”; Max Schmidt, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58500/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhlschmi?ctx=13b884ef-4214-45bb-be2d-580746b256b5&idx=0>.

⁴⁹ “Mein Vater, Eher von Beruf, war Grenzdeutscher. Er stammte aus einem Bezirk, der heute zur Republik Polen gehört, und lernte daher schon in früher Jugend den Nationalitäten- und Grenzkampf kennen, der damals in den siebziger Jahren des 19l. Jahrhunderts ziemlich stark zwischen Deutschen und Polen tobte. Er blieb daher bis an sein Lebensende 1929 ein fanatischer Nationalist. Dementsprechend erzog er mich auch.”; unknown, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58297/span-classqueryhlunknownspan?ctx=fe4606fd-2fae-4a4a-9653-60016966fcd5&idx=2>.

⁵⁰ “...kannte ich als Kind den Kampf, den wir Grenzlanddeutsche bereits in der alten Monarchie für unser Deutschtum kämpfen mussten.”; Raimund Mayer, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58619/span-classqueryhlraimundspan-span-classqueryhlm?ctx=fe70a8a1-960b-445e-ae62-618129a78aa4&idx=0>.

[German] education and folk customs in such border areas,” he remarked, “that is something one cannot get an insight into as a *Reich* German. As school children we already had feuds, which frequently took a rather bloody course. When one Sunday such a squabble between the German and Czech boys took place again, I knocked the right external ear off an opponent with a piece of slate.”⁵¹ Mayer and the others regarded the nationality struggle as in the natural course of things, with the post-war hostilities and the antagonisms resulting from the losses incurred then the contemporary manifestations of a long-standing dynamic.

Other respondents, however, offer a more positive account of the pre-war era, describing a peaceful co-existence that only after the war turned out to have been precarious. Werner Kauffmann, son of a Posen estate owner, wrote: “In the holidays, I knew nothing better than to roam through fields and forests with the children of the farm hands of German and Polish mother tongue, of Lutheran and Catholic confession, resident on my father’s estate and to also learn practical skills in agriculture, in the manor forge and the manor’s cartwright workshop. With many of my then-companions a close friendship without any trace of differences of social rank united me then, which was only definitively torn apart by the events on the basis of the Versailles Treaty.”⁵² Kauffmann thus portrayed himself not as naturally and invariably antagonistic toward Polish-speakers, but as moved to a confrontational attitude by post-war developments. August

⁵¹ "Die Erziehung und die volkstümlichen Gebräuche auf so Grenzgebieten zu erhalten, davon kann man als Reichsdeutscher keinen Einblick bekommen. Als Schulkinder hatten wir bereits Fehden, die desöftern ziemlich blutig verlaufen sind. Als eines Sonntags wieder so ein Geplänkel zwischen und deutschen und tschechischen Jungens stattfand, schlug ich mit einen [sic] Schieferstein einen [sic] Gegner die rechte Ohrmuschel ab.;" Ibid.

⁵² "In den Ferien kannte ich nichts schöneres, als mit den Kindern der auf dem Gute meines Vaters ansässigen Landarbeiter deutscher und polnischer Muttersprache, evangelischer und katholischer Konfession durch Feld und Wald zu streifen und auch die praktischen Handgriffe in der Landwirtschaft, in der Gutschmiede und Gutsstellmacherei zu erlernen. Mit vielen meiner damaligen Gefährten verband mich damals ohne jede Spur sozialer Rangunterschiede eine enge Freundschaft, die erst durch die Geschehnisse auf Grund des Versailler Vertrages endgültig zerrissen wurde.;" Werner Kauffmann, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58794/span-classqueryhlwernerspan-kauffmann?ctx=79974b0b-b5a1-45c2-991d-07eecbb4de31&idx=9>.

Marleiter, who had grown up in Upper Silesia's far Western *Neißer Ländchen*, which bordered the Sudetenland, took a kindred position. As a child, his nationalism had been sparked by the perplexing observation that the Austrian Germans across the border were culturally German and yet did not belong to the German state. Their struggle against the empire's other, hostile nationalities, without support from their government, awakened his "deepest sympathy."⁵³ The pan-German nationalism Marleiter developed at the Upper Silesian border with the Sudetenland did not, however, manifest in antagonism toward the Polish-speakers in other parts of his province. Rather, he determinedly portrayed indigenous Upper Silesians as thoroughly German. When he moved "to another border area" about 100 kilometers to the East to become a teacher in Rybnik county,⁵⁴ the most heavily Polish-speaking in the province, Marleiter, for example, found to his surprise that, "...these 'pollacks' were not actually Poles, but proudly felt Prussian and German. I had far fewer difficulties with the population as a teacher speaking German only than many a Polish-speaking colleague. I was always gladly invited to family parties and found there that among the autochthonous Upper Silesian population a Polish question did not actually exist."⁵⁵ "It," he maintained instead, "was carried into Upper Silesia artificially by Polish clergy, agents, through doctors and particularly pharmacists, who had moved there from Poland and Posen."⁵⁶ This supposed influx of Polish agitators had made him, unlike Kauffmann, deeply concerned about Germany's Eastern politics. In his biogram, he pilloried the imperial government for having been soft with regard thereto and professed that it had become apparent to him during these pre-war years that "only

⁵³ "stärkste Anteilnahme"; August Marleiter, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=5e111d47-774a-4fa1-8590-ddbf637551e9&idx=0>.

⁵⁴ "in ein anderes Grenzgebiet"; Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Mit Erstaunen sah ich, daß diese "Pollacken" [die er im vorigen Satz als Wasserpolnisch-sprechend beschreibt] gar keine Polen waren, sondern sich stolz als Preußen und Deutsch fühlten. Ich habe als nur deutsch-sprechender Lehrer weit weniger Schwierigkeiten mit der Bevölkerung gehabt, als mancher polnisch-sprechende Kollege. Gern wurde ich auch immer zu Familienfeiern eingeladen und fand dabei, daß bei der eingesessenen Oberschlesischen Bevölkerung eine polnische Frage gar nicht existierte."; Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Die ist in OS künstlich hineingetragen worden durch polnische Geistliche, Agenten, durch Ärzte und namentlich Drogisten, die aus Polen und Posen zuzogen."; Ibid.

the unanimous standing together of all Germans without differences of class or confession and beyond the borders can protect us from the Slavic flood and at all save the people.”⁵⁷ He nevertheless remained positive about Upper Silesia’s native population, who, as eager as other Germans to defend the fatherland, had fought exceptionally bravely in the First World War and thus provided a towering example of just such standing together. Unlike those who reportedly experienced a ferocious nationality struggle already before the war, Marleiter and his ilk considered the anti-Polish attitudes that had done their part to lead them to the NSDAP a reaction to Polish agitation that had disturbed the German-led, multiethnic harmony that they envisaged as the borderlands’ natural state.

The First World War features as a disruption of the borderlands’ status quo, however conceived, mainly in biograms by East Prussians, who had experienced the region’s invasion by the Russians in the war’s early months. In the first days of war, ten-year-old Josef Trzarka’s family, which owned a tavern in Ortelsburg county, had fifty soldiers quartered with them and refugees, whose villages had already fallen to the Russians, were coming through. When the Russian army advanced on Ortelsburg, Trzarka and his family fled too. Two days after the Battle of Tannenberg they returned to find their home destroyed. Though the Russians never actually passed through again, the Trzarkas fled twice more and for years thereafter Josef and the other village boys got up to “mischief” with abandoned guns and munition.⁵⁸ Refugees bearing news of the Russian invasion passed through twelve-year-old Walter Szimba’s village in Lötzen county as well and evacuation was soon ordered. After a few days’ stay with an uncle in a different part of the county, they could return and bring in the harvest, but in October

⁵⁷ “Ich lerne aber eine Erkenntnis in diesen Jahren: nur das einmütige Zusammenstehen aller Deutschen ohne Unterschied des Standes und der Konfession und über die Grenzen hinaus kann uns vor der slawischen Flut schützen und uns als Volk überhaupt retten.”; Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Unfug”; Josef Trzarka, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58390/josef-span-classqueryhltrzarkaspan?ctx=cd785149-5ef0-47a5-9f74-0383831b015a&idx=0>.

they had to flee again and this time were sent all the way to Hannover. Szimba's neighbor and aunt did not want to leave the village. The former spent five years as a prisoner in Siberia, while the latter was found dead in the basement of the family home.⁵⁹ The most detailed and harrowing account of East Prussia's invasion though is provided by the then-teenaged Frau Nieke, a servant from Lyck county. Despite passing refugees' recommendations, she and other members of the household chose to hide in barges among the local lake's reeds rather than flee. Having spent several cold days thus, they returned to the village only for Frau Nieke and the other young women to be plagued by fear of rape. They did not wash for days and wore old women's clothes, hoping that the Russian soldiers would neither recognize nor desire them. After one officer had expressed a liking of her, Frau Nieke spent a night hiding in the basement, praying that he would not come to fetch her. In the end, they did have to quit the village in October 1914 and Frau Nieke, weary of life in the refugee camp and wishing to be useful, registered with the police in early 1915 and was given a post knitting for the military in Osnabrück. She thereupon left East Prussia permanently.⁶⁰

In contrast to the trauma experienced by East Prussians, two respondents remembered the mobilization they witnessed at Germany's borders in 1914 in a more hopeful way. In a borderlands-specific variation on the fabled spirit of that year, Upper Silesian G. Goretzki told, all parties were forgotten as everyone united around Germany's defense with thoughts of "'The fatherland is in need'. – 'Borderland in danger!'"⁶¹ For Kurt Liebelt from the Province of Posen too the onset of war was formative. His parents were liberal former civil servants, with no appreciation of Nazism, but they had not, he said, shaped his political outlook decisively. "Far more significant for me as a border

⁵⁹ Walter Szimba, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58735/walter-span-classqueryhlszimbaspan?ctx=3f86b4fc-735d-48bd-a1c3-9da3c7f67c23&idx=0>.

⁶⁰ Frau Nieke, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58403/span-classqueryhlfrauspan-span-classqueryhlniek?ctx=7a9fd573-29b4-4b11-9786-8240d0d23769&idx=0>.

⁶¹ "'Das Vaterland ist in Not'. - 'Grenzland in Gefahr!.'"; G. Goretzki, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>.

German were the impressions during the first time of the war, when we experienced the deployment of troops to the East, and the post-war time with the Polish uprising. Particularly in the time after the war, during which we suffered the ever more ruthless pressure of the Poles, I grew conscious for the first time that Germandom was something for which one must fight,” he wrote.⁶² Liebelt remembered the borderlanders’ *Augusterlebnis*, like the fight for their home regions after the war, as having brought home to him the necessity and efficaciousness of their united, impassioned defense, a task the NSDAP was continuing.

That post-war moment of German territorial vulnerability could arise only, some respondents maintained, because borderlands residents who were at root German had fallen under the sway of Polish activists. August Marleiter, for one, blamed Upper Silesia’s plebiscite and the increasing Polish sympathies that necessitated it on the influence of outside agitators, who he, as mentioned above, had already held responsible for pre-war stirrings of Polish nationalism. “When the November revolution broke out the foreign elements in Upper Silesia primarily came to the foreground and,” he averred, “understood how to steer the socialist-bolshevist wave that went through the masses of workers onto nationalist-Polish territory and to turn it against Germandom, by calling the German owners, civil servants, factory leaders oppressors. Only thus could the Polish question get going in Upper Silesia.”⁶³ Nevertheless, the plebiscite’s outcome and the

⁶² “Weit wesentlicher waren für mich als Grenzdeutschen die Eindrücke während der ersten Zeit des Krieges, wo wir die Gruppen-Aufmärsche nach dem Osten erlebten, und die der Nachkriegszeit mit dem Polenaufstand. Namentlich in der Zeit nach dem Kriege, in der wir ständig unter dem immer rücksichtsloserem Druck der Polen zu leiden hatten, wurde mir zum ersten Male bewusst, dass das Deutschtum etwas war, wofür es zu kämpfen galt.”; Kurt Liebelt, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58441/span-classqueryhkurtspace-span-classqueryhllieb?ctx=7289d3f2-6b60-47a3-8215-9c81cb403372&idx=0>.

⁶³ “Als die Novemberrevolution ausgebrochen war, da traten in Oberschlesien in der Hauptsache die landfremden Elemente in den Vordergrund und verstanden es, die sozialistisch-bolschewistische Welle, die durch die Arbeitermassen ging, auf’s national-polnische Gebiet zu lenken und gegen das Deutschtum zu richten, indem sie den deutschen Besitzer, Beamten, Werksherrn als Unterdrücker bezeichneten. Nur so konnte in Oberschlesien die polnische Frage in Fluß kommen.”; August Marleiter, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=5e111d47-774a-4fa1-8590-ddbf637551e9&idx=0>.

local make-up of the *Selbstschutz* proved, he argued, that there was no native desire for a border change. Eduard Holema, another Upper Silesian, agreed: “If the Upper Silesian inhabitants had so far been good German patriots, then the lost war, helped by Polish agitators, who promised the Upper Silesian population golden mountains in the case of Upper Silesia’s allocation to Poland, beguiled the sense of many inhabitants. On the one side there was Germany after the lost war, tearing itself apart and surrounded by victor states, in part occupied militarily, paying enormous reparations, on the other side Poland, surrounded by the nimbus of resurrection, paying no reparations and therefore also not shy with its promises.”⁶⁴ Despite this rhetoric and Polish terrorism, the plebiscite, as a victory for Germany, was “proof of the love of Upper Silesia’s inhabitants for the German fatherland.”⁶⁵

Germans, Abel’s respondents emphasized, faced the threat to the borderlands united, across party and other lines. Winfried Harhausen, at the time a child in Bromberg, described how in that city, “In those days there was there no party, but only Germans, who loved their *Heimat* above all and who were prepared to defend it to the last.”⁶⁶ When a delegation of foreign parliamentarians had come to see the national situation in Bromberg for themselves, he recalled, unity had reigned, with his father, a prominent pastor, speaking to the gathered crowds and being met with cheers and choruses of *Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott*. In language reminiscent of that usually reserved for August

⁶⁴ “Waren bisher die oberschlesischen Bewohner gute deutsche Patrioten, so hat doch der verlorene Krieg auch hier, unterstützt durch polnische Agitatoren, die der oberschlesischen Bevölkerung, im Falle der Zuteilung Oberschlesiens ans Polen, goldene Berge versprochen, die Sinne vieler Bewohner betört. Auf der einen Seite lag Deutschland nach dem verlorenen Kriege, sich selbst zerfleischen und umgeben von den Siegerstaaten, zum Teil militärisch besetzt, ungeheure Kontributionen leistend, auf der anderen Seit Polen, umgeben von dem Nimbus des Neuaufstandenen, keine Lasten von Kriege aus leitend und daher auch nicht zag in seinen Versprechungen.”; Eduard Holema, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58441/span-classqueryhllkurtspan-span-classqueryhllieb?ctx=7289d3f2-6b60-47a3-8215-9c81cb403372&idx=0>.

⁶⁵ “als Beweis der Liebe der oberschlesischen Bewohner zum deutschen Vaterlande”; Ibid.

⁶⁶ “In diesen Tagen gab es dort keine Partei, sondern nur deutsche, die ihre Heimat über alles liebten, und die bereit waren, sie bis zum letzten zu verteidigen.”; Winfried Harhausen, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58291/winfried-span-classqueryhllharhausenspan?ctx=7aa756d1-004d-44de-8d4f-5367bba0395f&idx=0>.

1914, Schoepke, who had experienced this time in rural West Prussia, likewise recounted how, “All of a sudden all parties had vanished and there was one big German Party, which now tried to obtain for Germandom what was at all still possible...The misery about the *Heimat*, about blood and soil, united the population. The whole person often balked unconsciously with heart and soul against this unnatural-ness. But it was too late!”⁶⁷ Upper Silesian Goretzki made the comparison with the spirit of 1914 explicit, writing “Once more love of the fatherland flared up in the people like in those August days of 1914. Everything that can move, young, old, frail, everyone made the election journey to Upper Silesia. Victory was ours!”⁶⁸ The experience of the post-war moment, Heinacher too observed in his study of Flensburg’s Nazi activists, gave then-young men a taste of what the much-vaunted August 1914 had been like.⁶⁹ This acclaimed unity was conspicuous to Wilhelm Trapp, from the Province of Posen, by the absence thereof he found outside the borderlands. “On June 10, 1921 I emigrated from the territory ceded to Poland, because I was reluctant to become a Polish soldier,” he explained and remarked, “I felt alienated by the disunity of the Germans here, in contrast to those in the ceded territory.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ “Mit einem Male waren alle Parteien verschwunden, und es gab, eine grosse Deutsche Partei, die nun versuchte für das Deutschtum herauszuschlagen, was noch irgendwie möglich war...Die Not um die Heimat, um Blut und Boden hatte die Bevölkerung geeint. Der ganze Mensch sträubte sich oft unbewusst mit tiefster Seele gegen diese Naturwidrigkeit. Aber es war zu spät!”; Schoepke, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=e95033d1-115d-4de2-9201-ef07ad5977ef&idx=0>.

⁶⁸ “Nochmals flammt im Volke die Vaterlandsliebe wie in jenen Augusttagen 1914 auf [*N.B.: Vergleich Abstimmung-spirit of 1914!*]. Alles was sich bewegen kann, Junge, Alte, Kranke, Gebrechliche, alle treten die Wahlfahrt nach Oberschlesien an.”; G. Goretzki, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>.

⁶⁹ Peter Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg* (Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte e.V., 1986), 244.

⁷⁰ “Am 10.6. 1921 bin ich aus dem an Polen abgetretenen Gebiet ausgewandert, weil es mir wiederstrebt [sic] Polnischer Soldat zu werden. Befremdet hat mich die Uneinigkeit der Deutschen hier, im Gegensatz zu denen im abgetretenen Gebiet.”; Wilhelm Trapp, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58695/span-classqueryhlwilhelmspan-span-classqueryhlt?ctx=d2729b93-1820-4713-9e46-dc0e9d24c905&idx=0>.

This united defensiveness of Germany found expression in plebiscite campaigning. Eduard Holema, for instance, reported that “German-thinking, loyal” Upper Silesians had everywhere established associations.⁷¹ “I too,” he proudly told, “was among them and served the *Verband der heimattreuen Oberschlesier* as secretary. This I did until the last day of the leaving of my *Heimat*, despite threatening letters and threats from the Poles. Even today it is a happy memory for me that I could assist a great number of my compatriots with help and advice and was allowed to raise up many a demoralized compatriot.”⁷² Holema continued his activism in the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, which maintained branches composed of internal migrants across Germany, even after he took a job in Berlin in 1923. Max Rudolph, meanwhile, boasted that his wife had propagandized for Germany during the run-up to the Upper Silesian plebiscite.⁷³ Even children got involved. Paul Matter, who grew up in East Prussia’s Marienburg county, took his first political steps as a ten-year-old, when he distributed leaflets with the message that “we East Prussians all wanted to remain German” in preparation for the region’s 1920 plebiscite.⁷⁴ Similarly, Heinz Gefaeller was asked in school to collect signatures for West Prussia and Danzig and soon learned that East Prussia and the Memel region, where he lived, were in jeopardy too. Lying in bed, he cried bitterly and prayed that he be allowed to remain German.⁷⁵

⁷¹ “deutschgesinnten heimattreuen Oberschlesier”; Eduard Holema, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58441/span-classqueryhllkurtspan-span-classqueryhllieb?ctx=7289d3f2-6b60-47a3-8215-9c81cb403372&idx=0>.

⁷² “Auch ich war unter ihnen und leistete als Schriftführer dem Verband der heimattreuen Oberschlesier Dienste. Dies habe ich bis zum letzten Tage des Verlassen meiner Heimat, trotz Drohbriefe und Bedrohungen seitens der Polen, getan. Noch heute ist es mir eine glücklich Erinnerung, daß ich in diesen Irrungen und Wirkungen einer großen Unzahl meiner Landsleute mit Rat und Tat beistehen und so manchen zermürbten Landsmann aufrichten durfte.”; Ibid.

⁷³ Max Rudolph, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58793/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhllrudol?ctx=0e0cc75c-4a2d-47bf-943f-4a9e2d159493&idx=0>.

⁷⁴ “daß wir Ostpreußen alle deutsch bleiben wollten”; Paul Matter, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58572/span-classqueryhlpaulspan-span-classqueryhlmatt?ctx=1c827577-abf1-42ac-a799-97b67cd60aa6&idx=0>.

⁷⁵ Heinz Gefaeller, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58393/heinz-span-classqueryhlgefaellerspan?ctx=083cf521-5da1-492f-846d-3c176f95a9aa&idx=0>.

Many more respondents came to the German borders' armed defense. A great many of these volunteers came from the German interior with A. Knell from the Palatinate,⁷⁶ Friedrich Kell⁷⁷ and Karl Kell from Pomerania,⁷⁸ Richard Quack from Potsdam,⁷⁹ a certain Stehen from Brandenburg,⁸⁰ and Arthur Herrmann,⁸¹ Paul Fritze,⁸² and Wilhelm Gorf from Berlin all mentioning they had served in the army's *Grenzschutz* units or in *Freikorps*, primarily in Silesia.⁸³ A certain Stummeyer lived and worked in Hamburg-Harburg, but bragged of having smuggled munitions into the region when he was in Upper Silesia with the *Organisation Escherich*.⁸⁴ Paul Grosche from Swinemünde returned from several years at the front just to fight with various *Freikorps* in the Baltics, against the Spartacists, for the Kapp putsch, and, of course, in Silesia.⁸⁵ For men like these, participation in the borders' protection was an exploit to be added to mostly lengthy nationalist CVs.

More interestingly, other militants, some of them youths, lived in the regions they sought to defend. Max Lenz, for example, joined the *Grenzschutz* in his native Border

⁷⁶ A. Knell, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58645/a-span-classqueryhlnellspan?ctx=4f06f1cd-de9d-4078-9584-a2abd6bc0683&idx=0>.

⁷⁷ Friedrich Kell, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58711/span-classqueryhlfriedrichspan-w-span-classquery?ctx=1633006a-d59b-4245-918b-979fd979abea&idx=0>.

⁷⁸ Karl Kell, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58708/span-classqueryhkarlspan-span-classqueryhllkell?ctx=dcddcde8-e191-4487-aa8b-ed1981bd4baf&idx=0>.

⁷⁹ Richard Quack, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58499/span-classqueryhrrichardspan-span-classqueryhlq?ctx=4d959ce5-2c1e-44eb-b369-90adb5969cb&idx=0>.

⁸⁰ Stehen, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58532/span-classqueryhlstehenspan?ctx=6c4553f6-21d2-4deb-aadd-fa479029f8dc&idx=0>.

⁸¹ Arthur Herrmann, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58807/span-classqueryhlarthurspan-span-classqueryhlhe?ctx=66d02121-a2e0-4eff-b0e2-d5a1b4e2dbd0&idx=0>.

⁸² Paul Fritze, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58330/span-classqueryhlpaulspan-span-classqueryhlfrit?ctx=ab9d54d6-717d-415f-be99-88ef58bedd5b&idx=0>.

⁸³ Wilhelm Gorf, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58617/span-classqueryhlwilhelmspan-span-classqueryhlg?ctx=f11497ea-634e-4c24-998d-6a65b7461b3f&idx=0>.

⁸⁴ Stummeyer, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58258/span-classqueryhlstummeyerspan?ctx=98c6d3df-8da6-450a-a737-5a0fdae83bf1&idx=0>.

⁸⁵ Paul Grosche, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58266/span-classqueryhlpaulspan-span-classqueryhlgros?ctx=6e83e3f9-f51c-436f-ad93-51df5cafdfa9&idx=0>.

Province in July 1919 at just seventeen.⁸⁶ Roland Schoenfelder, meanwhile, was the son of a military father from near Stettin and had spent his youth in cadet schools in or near Berlin but refused to become an officer “by Ebert’s grace.”⁸⁷ Instead, he moved to West Prussia to learn agriculture, where he joined the local *Grenzschutz* immediately. Walter Treue, for his part, lamented that, “the unhappy ending of the war also did not bring any better days, for now the Pole became rebellious.”⁸⁸ “German settlers, however, held what they had acquired in years-long, arduous work fast in their hands,” he related, “even we boys of 15 years kept watch day and night with weapon in hand and gave bloody battle on December 4, 1918 near Kulmsee to the Pole, who at least for now gave up the idea of returning.”⁸⁹ Standing up to the Poles was, for him, his proudest youthful achievement.

Other local *Grenzschutz* volunteers were veterans of the world war. Upon his return from the front, Goretzki, for instance, was dismayed to find Upper Silesia changed by Polish agitators, writing, “Here it is the same too. My Upper Silesian *Heimat* has become different. False leaders of the people have appeared and poisoned the people’s minds. Here Germany, here Poland. 4 years ago one only knew the watchword Germany here!”⁹⁰ In response, he promptly joined the *Grenzschutz*. He then left to study in Görlitz

⁸⁶ Max Lenz, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58591/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhllenz?ctx=1d1b1e74-e9a4-4d13-8b64-b620865be6ca&idx=0>.

⁸⁷ “von Ebert Gnaden”; Roland Schoenfelder, accessed September 19, 2019,

<https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58800/roland-span-classqueryhlschoenfelderspan?ctx=a2de450d-ddbc-4871-b4c9-669e821a2513&idx=0>.

⁸⁸ “...das unglückliche Kriegsende brachte auch keine besseren Tage, denn jetzt wurde der Pole rebellisch.”; Walter Treue, accessed September 18, 2019,

<https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58538/span-classqueryhlwalterspan-span-classqueryhltr?ctx=c36d008d-f6b5-49cc-96b5-bf0fe22fa212&idx=0>.

⁸⁹ “Jedoch deutsche Ansiedler hielten was sie in jahrelanger, mühevoller Arbeit erworben hatten fest in ihren Händen, selbst wir Jungen von 15 Jahren hielten mit der Waffe in der Hand Tag und Nacht wache und lieferten dem Polen am 4. Dezember 1918 bei Kulmsee ein blutiges Gefecht, so daß er vorerst das Wiederkommen vergaß.”; Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Auch hier dasselbe. Meine oberschlesische Heimat ist anders geworden. Falsche Volksführer sind aufgetreten und verhetzen das Volk. Hier Deutschland, hier Polen. Vor 4 Jahren kannte man hier nur die Parole Deutschland!”; G. Goretzki, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>.

but returned in 1921 to do “my service in the *Deutscher Schutzbund*.”⁹¹ Erich Hinz similarly detailed how, “When my fatherland collapsed in 1918 and my *Heimat* was threatened by Poland, I signed up voluntarily for the *Grenzschutz* in Upper Silesia.”⁹² When he returned to the former Province of Posen on leave to visit his family, it had fallen under Polish rule and he was expelled. Walter Kählitz, from a Berlin suburb, meanwhile, had only just moved to West Prussia after the war to learn agriculture, when he was called upon to defend his new home region and became a company commander in the reserve *Grenzschutz*.⁹³ Johann Klaaßen enlisted in the *Grenzschutzkommando Löbau* straight out of military service.⁹⁴ These men took pride in prolonging their armed commitment to the vulnerable Germany to which they returned. In his one-page biogram, Kurt Daum, for instance, focuses on his wartime experience as a volunteer of the first hour who had been wounded twice and then concludes, “On December 1, 1918 I was dismissed home. Through the Poles’ insurrection I was again a *Grenzschutz* soldier with the Infantry Regiment 61 from January 3, 1919 to August 1, 1919.”⁹⁵ A certain Wiesch from Küstrin had likewise been eager to participate in the war, but, as a teenager, had had to wait to be drafted until the spring of 1918. He was dispatched to the front that fall. Dismissed around Christmas 1918, he signed up for the *Grenzschutz* on January 4, 1919 and served in assorted units in what became the Border Province.⁹⁶

⁹¹ “meinen Dienst im deutschen Schutzbund”; Ibid.

⁹² “Als 1918 mein Vaterland zusammenbrach u. meine Heimat bedroht wurde durch Polen - meldete ich mich freiwillig zum Grenzschutz nach Oberschlesien.”; Erich Hinz, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58581/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlhin?ctx=df23c12d-71e7-4393-86eb-376cfbdd091a&idx=0>.

⁹³ Walter Kählitz, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58497/walter-span-classqueryhkahlitzspan?ctx=2f9ffe4b-49df-4ac3-a870-00920a46ca92&idx=0>.

⁹⁴ Johann Klaaßen, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58741/span-classqueryhljohannspan-klaaen?ctx=b1e03fc6-4267-4aa1-9ddd-5507d06fc459&idx=13>.

⁹⁵ “Durch den Aufstand der Polen war ich wieder Grenzschutzsoldat beim Infanterie Regiment 61 vom 3.1.1919 bis 1.8.1919.”; Kurt Daum, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58732/span-classqueryhkkurtspan-span-classqueryhlldaum?ctx=6d0eeec3-61e2-4059-9abb-8a21ac9ff86c&idx=0>.

⁹⁶ Wiesch?, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58592/span-classqueryhlwieschspan-?ctx=c4cad02a-b7d4-4836-af17-4b03648aab66&idx=0>.

One respondent's story lends some credence to contemporary republican fears that Nazism's initial growth in Upper Silesia was facilitated by nationalist fighters remaining in the region. Erich Femke had been born in 1885 in Pomeranian Ziezeneff to a father who was a veteran and invalid of the 1866 Austro-Prussian war. His tales inspired Erich to wish to pursue a career as a soldier. Despite being rejected repeatedly, he continued to apply to the army and was eventually accepted. After serving in the First World War, he initially joined a *Grenzschutz* company in East Prussia, but was discharged in October 1919 in the course of the army's downsizing. The following month he received a job as a border guard with the Upper Silesian customs administration. Occupation troops arrived in the region soon after he did and he witnessed how "Frenchmen, Poles, and insurgents worked hand in hand, brought munitions and weapons over the border and much else besides."⁹⁷ The next year he married back home in Pomerania and was then joined in Upper Silesia by his bride for a "quite romantic" first year of marriage, during which he, among other things, trained his wife in the use of firearms, so that she could defend herself against the rising tide of everyday violence.⁹⁸ When the situation heated up further in 1921, however, Femke sent his wife home to Pomerania. With her safely gone, he took on the hazardous role of messenger for the German paramilitaries, which he continued to perform even behind enemy lines. For this he was later awarded the Upper Silesian Eagle II Class, an order that the army created for those who had served in its Silesian *Grenzschutz* units in 1918-1919 and that the commander of the *Selbstschutz* semi-officially reinstated in 1921 with the acquiescence of the regional army command.⁹⁹ After Upper Silesia's partition, he was transferred to the new customs office in Borsigwerk, where conflict promptly erupted once more, lasting

⁹⁷ "wie Franzosen, Polen und Aufständische Hand in Hand arbeiteten, Munition und Waffen über die Grenze brachten und vieles andere mehr"; Erich Femke, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58487/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlfem?ctx=703e6ae1-e518-43bf-9192-c58549229a1d&idx=0>.

⁹⁸ "ziemlich romantisch"; Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Schlesischer Adler," Schlesien Portal - Offizielle Homepage der Landsmannschaft Schlesien, accessed September 23, 2020, <http://landsmannschaft-schlesien.de/schlesien/schlesischer-adler/>.

three weeks. Femke got in touch with the *Selbstschutz* again and there heard of “a Hitler movement” for the first time.¹⁰⁰ While he followed the Beer Hall Putsch with interest and was, by his own account, almost reported by three colleagues for exclaiming “‘Long live Hitler and Ludendorff’” in that context, he primarily focused on his career in the mid-1920s.¹⁰¹ He was promoted to a post as *Oberzollsekretär* in Annaberg, where he joined the Nazi party in 1929, before transferring back to Pomerania in 1931 after over a decade in Upper Silesia. Unfortunately, Abel received no biograms from anyone still resident in Upper Silesia in 1934; rather, all the many people who reported on the region had moved away. Similarly, very few respondents had joined the party prior to November 1923. These geographical and chronological limitations of Abel’s sample preclude further inferences concerning the make-up and motivations of the early Upper Silesian party.

The resistance to border alterations put up by both militants like Femke and civilian activists was, of course, in vain and many Germans left their homes when territories were ceded to neighboring states, a traumatic experience that crops up repeatedly in the biograms. Some writers referred to their exile only briefly and matter-of-factly. Bartsch, for example, mentions only perfunctorily in his opening paragraph that the village in which he was born now lay in Lithuania.¹⁰² Oskar Hollatz’s one-page text likewise treated his leaving Graudenz county in 1925 at the Polish authorities’ behest cursorily.¹⁰³ In similarly few words, Rudolf Freimann, whose Russian German family had settled in the Province of Posen when he was fifteen, described his “precipitate” departure from there when he opted for German citizenship.¹⁰⁴ Due to his anti-Polish

¹⁰⁰ “einer Hitlerbewegung”; Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “‘Hoch lebe Hitler und Ludendorff’”; Ibid.

¹⁰² Bartsch, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58394/span-classqueryhlbartschspan?ctx=0c0d31a1-adad-417a-980f-ad11f1e7415f&idx=0>.

¹⁰³ Oskar Hollatz, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58726/span-classqueryhloskarspan-holiatz?ctx=c0a4e933-6aea-4981-b83e-449cb54c635a&idx=1>.

¹⁰⁴ “fluchtartig”; Rudolf Freimann, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58749/span-classqueryhlrudolfspan-span-classqueryhlfr?ctx=f0f96213-987f-496d-ab3e-4f798c65a177&idx=0>.

political views, Kurt Daum too opted for Germany and left Graudenz county in 1922.¹⁰⁵ Walter Treue, who had chronicled his family's settler existence and villagers' determined struggle against the Poles in some detail, tersely concluded that his family was expelled in 1920.¹⁰⁶ Leokardia Kogalski was expelled, in her case from the Province of Posen, having first been made, as a nurse, to tend the Polish wounded.¹⁰⁷ Wilhelm Henkel also explained that his family was expelled from Alsace by the French authorities for being non-native Germans.¹⁰⁸ Some had very concrete reasons for choosing to leave once their regions changed hands. Max Schmidt quit West Prussia because he did not know any Polish.¹⁰⁹ Kurt Liebelt's family, meanwhile, moved from the Province of Posen to Berlin when he was fourteen because his father had refused to continue his work in the postal service under Polish rule.¹¹⁰ Max Rudolph was unable to continue his employment as a trained chemist in one of Upper Silesia's foundries, for which he had moved to the region in early 1918, because it was on Polish territory from 1921 and he declined to adopt Polish citizenship.¹¹¹ Willy Unger was denied not only the inheritance of his deceased father's farm but was also expected to serve in the Polish army, so he too opted for German citizenship in 1925.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Kurt Daum, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58732/span-classqueryhllkurtspan-span-classqueryhldaum?ctx=6d0eeec3-61e2-4059-9abb-8a21ac9ff86c&idx=0>.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Treue, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58538/span-classqueryhllwalterspan-span-classqueryhltr?ctx=c36d008d-f6b5-49cc-96b5-bf0fe22fa212&idx=0>.

¹⁰⁶ "Auch hier dasselbe. Meine oberschlesische Heimat ist anders geworden. Falsche Volksführer sind aufgetreten

¹⁰⁷ Leokardia Kogalski, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58530/span-classqueryhllleokardiaspan-kogalski?ctx=182d8168-99c6-46be-a1cd-0ce31e861489&idx=0>.

¹⁰⁸ Wilhelm Henkel, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58626/span-classqueryhllwilhelmspan-span-classqueryhlh?ctx=0102e73d-3c1a-4c86-9d0b-2f0044b73914&idx=0>.

¹⁰⁹ Max Schmidt, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58500/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhllschmi?ctx=a070d35e-6090-435a-80fa-9191719645d7&idx=0>.

¹¹⁰ Kurt Liebelt, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58441/span-classqueryhllkurtspan-span-classqueryhllieb?ctx=20ec6a46-a63b-469c-b5c4-6e889cf80882&idx=0>.

¹¹¹ Max Rudolph, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58793/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhlrudol?ctx=3c80a7e0-790a-4d9e-ae04-0a421a07c1a9&idx=0>.

¹¹² Willy Unger, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58743/span-classqueryhllwillyspan-span-classqueryhllung?ctx=2ed119a7-c8b6-4384-8a79-4667cd9f84f1&idx=0>.

A few highlighted not only that they had had to leave their homes, but also told of the emotional and economic distress they suffered during the process. Helene Radtke from Alsace, for instance, faced the possibility of family break-up. Her husband was for unspecified reasons not permitted to stay in Alsace after the war and she promptly joined him in Kassel. Soon, however, she returned to Alsace under her maiden name to fetch her child. Obtaining permission to leave again with her child was also hard to come by, but she insisted on returning to her husband. This resulted in her definitive expulsion and her loss of “all rights in my *Heimat*.”¹¹³ Schoepke, meanwhile, had feared for the life of his child and related the harrowing feeling of having to watch his then two-months-old daughter, an active member now of the League of German Maidens, almost die of cold during their departure from West Prussia.¹¹⁴ Willi Scharf’s father did die, of an illness he had contracted during the war, and was buried on December 1, 1921, the designated day for the first round of expulsions from the Province of Posen, a coincidence that carried deep symbolic weight in then-teenaged Willi’s eyes. His family’s expulsion was deferred, but when they finally did set out for Germany in October 1922, it was misery. Their train of refugees was sent from one camp to another, finding them all at capacity, before finally being deposited in a crowded former prisoner camp in Upper Silesia. Living multiple families to a room, with inferior food, was a humiliating step down for Willi from the middle-class existence his family had achieved in their fourteen years as settlers in the Province of Posen.¹¹⁵ August Marleiter had a similarly dismal experience of refugee life, spending five years in a barracks camp in Upper Silesian Neiße, the hometown he had left eighteen years earlier, before finally obtaining a teaching job in the

¹¹³ “alle Rechte in meiner Heimat”; Helene Radtke, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58432/helene-span-classqueryhhradtkespan?ctx=f26dfe5-548c-4fb8-86ee-e944f09d510a&idx=0>.

¹¹⁴ Schoepke, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=03943079-0175-4338-b883-dc8ccb07f021&idx=0>.

¹¹⁵ Willi Scharf, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=03943079-0175-4338-b883-dc8ccb07f021&idx=0>.

Ruhr in 1926.¹¹⁶ Waldemar Groetschel too found it difficult to gain a foothold after moving from eastern Upper Silesia to Leobschütz county in the region's still-German part, which he blamed on being frozen out due to his opposition to the Center Party.¹¹⁷

Some respondents or their families did not – or not immediately - quit the lost territories, a choice that too entailed hardship and bred bitterness. Erich Hinz, as mentioned above, fought in Upper Silesia and was interned when he went to visit his family in Filehne county, whose southern half had become Polish, while on leave. Asked to join the Polish army, which was then fighting the invading Soviet Union, he refused and was expelled. His family, however, stayed and still lived in Filehne county at the time of writing. Soon, Hinz wrote, his brother, fifteen years younger than he, would become liable for Polish military service.¹¹⁸ Werner Kauffmann's father too initially stayed put. When Werner tried to return to help him run the family's estate, the local starost warned him that he, as a former German reserve officer, was unwelcome and, since his visa was also running out, would be arrested if he did not leave again within twenty-four hours. Thus, he returned to Germany, where his father, having sold his property for money that would shortly be rendered worthless thanks to inflation, joined him.¹¹⁹ Like Werner's father, Winfried Harhausen, the pastor's son from Bromberg, at first stayed there. "We saw our mother cry, didn't understand ourselves what it means to have lost the *Heimat*, because for us this was initially all something new. Only later did

¹¹⁶ August Marleiter, accessed September 28, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=25e23b34-57a7-40e4-811d-09569cf49dd2&idx=0>.

¹¹⁷ Waldemar Groetschel, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58343/span-classqueryhlwaldemarspan-span-classqueryhl?ctx=8b69cc40-82fc-4e66-a3c8-814fa0b6d093&idx=0>.

¹¹⁸ Erich Hinz, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58581/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlhin?ctx=df23c12d-71e7-4393-86eb-376cfbdd091a&idx=0>.

¹¹⁹ Werner Kauffmann, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58794/span-classqueryhlwernerspan-kauffmann?ctx=79974b0b-b5a1-45c2-991d-07eecbb4de31&idx=9>.

we recognize our heavy loss,” he recalled.¹²⁰ It was later too that he comprehended the importance of maintaining Germandom abroad and his parents’ decision to continue in Bromberg for that reason. Winfried throughout his youth commuted to school first to Danzig and then to Posen and even served in the Polish army, but in 1927, instead of going to work for a German newspaper in Poland as he had intended, he moved to Germany to attend university. One fellow late re-settler by the name of Gustav Sorge even attracted the attention of Michael Mann in his study of the radicalization of later Nazi war criminals. Sorge’s family had left him to hold the fort, so to speak, in Polish Upper Silesia while they fled west, in order that he might one day reclaim their smallholding there. By the time he did leave for German Upper Silesia after all in 1930, he had developed a great hatred of the Poles. A year after his relocation, Sorge joined the Nazi party and the SS. During the war, he became an NCO in a death camp, where his brutality earned him the moniker “Iron George.”¹²¹

The separation or near separation from Germany sparked not only intense bitterness, however, but also pronounced sentimentalism. Schoepke paints a vivid picture of how his choir’s practices were transformed by the impending expulsion. German songs were sung with newfound earnestness and pathos, regularly moving singers to tears. Each rehearsal thus became “an hour of grief and leave-taking,” each song “a holy chorale.”¹²² When the moment to leave did come, it was a poignant experience for Erna Stoyke. She was born in the West Prussian village of Plowenz in 1913, but “I was only granted a few years to take joy in the property of my ancestors. One day, it was shortly before

¹²⁰ “Wir sahen unsere Mutter weinen, begriffen selbst noch nicht einmal, was es heisst, die Heimat verloren zu haben, denn für uns war das alles zunächst etwas neues. Erst später erkannten wir den schweren Verlust.”; Winfried Harhausen, accessed June 18, 2020,

<https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58291/winfried-span-classqueryhlharhausenspan?ctx=5ab0f859-20cb-44e5-934c-822ea3dd1899&idx=0>.

¹²¹ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196-197.

¹²² “eine Trauer- und Abschiedsstunde,“ “ein heiliger Choral“; Schoepke, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=e95033d1-115d-4de2-9201-ef07ad5977ef&idx=0>.

Christmas of the year [1921], I was fetched home from the boardinghouse of a small town to never return there again. An order had been issued by the Polish government to leave the formerly *kerndeutsch* area within 24 hours. In that moment I did not really know what it meant, until my parents told me take leave from your and your ancestors' *Heimat*. Once more I walked as a child through the places that had become so dear to me, and then everything was meant to be over."¹²³ Heinz Gefaeller, who grew up near Tilsit, had also experienced the postwar uncertainty surrounding the fate of East Prussia as a school-aged child and had cried in bed, praying to stay German. His wish was granted, but he felt the loss of the adjacent Memel territory keenly. Despite it having come under foreign rule, he and his friends continued to enjoy going swimming on the river's opposite bank. "One day after swimming," he recounted, "I filled my pockets with stones and brought them over the now-border, over the Queen-Luise-Bridge. Triumphantly I emptied them out in the proud consciousness of having brought a piece of earth, even if they were only stones, back into the fatherland."¹²⁴ In contrast to Gefaeller's mourning, Marta Gruse, originally from West Prussia but resident in the Marienburg area, foregrounded the fierce joy of loss averted. She recalled, "In 1919 the Posen province and a part of West Prussia became the Polish Corridor as a consequence of the Versailles Treaty. My hometown Bromberg was also occupied; a scream of indignation and sorrow

¹²³ "Nur wenige Jahre war es mir vergönnt, mich an dem Besitz meiner Väter zu erfreuen. Eines Tages, es war kurz vor Weihnachten des Jahres 192[durchgestrichene Zahl], wurde ich aus der Pension eines kleinen Städtchens nach Hause geholt, um nie mehr dort wiederzukehren. Es war der Befehl von der polnischen Regierung ergangen, binnen 24 Stunden das einstmals kerndeutsche Gebiet zu verlassen. Ich wusste im Augenblick nicht so recht was es bedeutete, bis meine Eltern mir sagten, nimm Abschied von deiner sowie deiner Vorfahren Heimat. Noch einmal ging ich als Kind durch die Stätten, die mir so liebe worden waren, und dann sollte alles aus sein."; Erna Stoyke, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58583/span-classqueryhlermaspan-span-classqueryhlstoy?ctx=fa9aba14-49c7-4cb6-a253-2207205d285e&idx=0>.

¹²⁴ "Eines Tages nach dem Baden füllte ich meine Taschen mit Steinen und brachte sie über die nunmehrige Grenze, über die Königin-Luise-Brücke. Triumphierend schüttete ich sie aus mit dem stolzen Bewusstsein ein Stück Erde und wenn es auch nur Steine waren ins Vaterland zurückgebracht zu haben."; Heinz Gefaeller, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58393/heinz-span-classqueryhlgefaellerspan?ctx=083cf521-5da1-492f-846d-3c176f95a9aa&idx=0>.

went through our heart. Then in 1920 came the plebiscite for our region here, which heaven be thanked turned out thus that we remained with Germany. Nobody can take away from one that wonderful feeling of joy to be a German. And our youth also again has this attitude when one asks them: ‘What would you want to be if you weren’t a German? – I only want to be a German!’”¹²⁵

For many respondents, the borderlands’ jeopardy and forfeiture was interwoven with the November revolution but distinct therefrom, a key juncture at which they lost faith in a republican government perceived as pusillanimous. In contrast to those who like him took up weapons for Upper Silesia’s defense or travelled there to vote in the plebiscite, Goretzki, for example, wrote, the government had proven “wimpish.”¹²⁶ Already in the two years preceding the plebiscite, when he, as a student in Görlitz, attended political meetings of various hues, he had shunned Marxist rallies, because “We live in a borderland – and our Silesian land is surrounded by hostile neighbors!”¹²⁷ No more did he trust the Center Party to safeguard Upper Silesia’s best interests. The son of Catholics with Polish surnames, Goretzki observed about post-war Upper Silesia that, “It was also painful for me as a Catholic to see how Roman-Catholic clerics, who studied at German universities, lived in Germany in good times, now agitate against my Germany. My Roman-Catholic faith received a sensitive crack.”¹²⁸ Priests’ ostensible campaigning

¹²⁵ “1919 wurde dann infolge des Versailler Vertrags die Provinz Posen und ein Teil Westpreußens der polnische Korridor. Meine Heimatstadt Bromberg wurde auch besetzt; ein Schrei der Empörung und des Jammers zog durch unser Herz. Dann kam hier für unsere Gegend 1920 die Volksabstimmung, die Gottseidank so ausfiel, daß wir bei Deutschland blieben. Das herrliche Gefühl der Freude, Deutscher zu sein, wird einem niemand nehmen. Und so ist auch unsere Jugend wieder eingestellt, wenn man die fragt: ‘Was möchtest du sein, wenn du kein Deutscher wärst? - Nur Deutscher möchte ich sein!’”; Marta Gruse, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58573/span-classqueryhlmartaspan-span-classqueryhlgru?ctx=96dd8611-8481-4c31-bd2b-157de92e0da1&idx=0>.

¹²⁶ “schlapp”; G. Goretzki, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>.

¹²⁷ “Wir leben ja im Grenzland - und unser Schlesierland ist von feindlichen Nachbarn umgeben!”; Ibid.

¹²⁸ “Für mich als Katholiken war ausserdem schmerzlich zu sehen, wie römisch-katholische Geistliche, die auf deutschen Hochschulen studiert, in guten Zeiten in Deutschland gelebt haben, jetzt gegen mein Deutschland hetzen. Meine römisch -katholische Glaubensauffassung hat einen empfindlichen Sprung bekommen.”; Ibid.

for Poland during the plebiscite, allegedly including by abusing the sacrament of confession to extract promises from voters, eroded his faith. When he continued to witness the Center party's supposed power politics as a civil servant in Lüneburg, he formally left the church. Already in a pre-war context, Goretzki's fellow native Upper Silesian Marleiter likewise censured the federal government's "weak and vacillating attitude"¹²⁹ with regard to "questions of *Auslandsdeutschum*"¹³⁰ and East Germany as well as the Center Party's "dubious and ruinous attitude" to Polish nationalist activism.¹³¹ After the war, Upper Silesia's occupation and insurgencies reinforced his impression that among peoples "right lay only with the strong."¹³² The government had by this logic acted dishonorably by disarming. He also throughout the republican years continued to repudiate the Center in particular for its unreliability in the Upper Silesian question. Schoepke went so far as to portray the government as not only complicit by its meekness but downright pleased with the country's territorial losses. When the Vistula corridor was granted Poland "[w]ithout consideration for economic, geographic, historical or *völkisch* concerns," he thus complained, "[t]he association of enemies [*Feindbund*] found splendid support from Marxism in Germany, which at every new German loss of territory expressed its satisfaction. Marxist and democratic rabble after all always convinced through word and writing that Germany was at fault for the world war and had to atone therefor."¹³³ Marta Gruse's rejection of the government, meanwhile, was explicitly anti-Semitic. What came of Jews, "foreign people," holding the reins of power, she wrote

¹²⁹ "schwache und schwankende"; August Marleiter, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=5e111d47-774a-4fa1-8590-ddbf637551e9&idx=0>.

¹³⁰ "Fragen des Auslandsdeutschums"; Ibid.

¹³¹ "zweifelhafte und verderbliche Haltung"; Ibid.

¹³² "das Recht nur beim Starken liegt"; Ibid.

¹³³ "Der Feindbund fand trefflichste Unterstützung durch den Marxismus in Deutschland, der ja bei jedem neuem Gebietsverlust Deutschlands seine Genugtuung ausdrückte. Marxistisches und demokratisches Gesindel überzeugte ja immer wieder durch wort und Schirft, dass Deutschland am Weltkriege schuld sein sollte und dafür zu büßen hätte."; Schoepke, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=e95033d1-115d-4de2-9201-ef07ad5977ef&idx=0>.

derisively, was illustrated by the “deplorable Treaty of Versailles.”¹³⁴ Richard Quack, too, argued that Germany could only be debased so much in the wake of the defeat, particularly by the Treaty of Versailles, because Jews controlled the corridors of power. Disillusioned, he joined “[t]hose *Freikorps* leaders who wanted to save what could still be saved” in Upper Silesia until 1922.¹³⁵ He was convinced that from there “these rulers, who were in Jewish pay, would have been finished off, if only the opportunity had existed.”¹³⁶

Playing to an established trope of right-wing rhetoric, others claimed to have lost faith specifically because they perceived the government to have inadequately supported the armed resistance to border changes or even to have sabotaged it by acceding to agreements with the Allies.¹³⁷ Max Rudolph, for example, declared, “If the Social Democratic government in Berlin had not stayed General Höfer’s hand, then our brave *Selbstschutz* folks would have chased the insurgents across the border.”¹³⁸ Then-teenaged Willi Scharf chronicled the valiant fight of his county *Grenzschutz* against the Poles, which raged just outside his home village, only to conclude by lamenting that it was all for naught. At the behest of a government that had signed a peace treaty prescribing

¹³⁴ “Und war es vollkommen klar geworden, wenn solche artfremden Menschen uns regieren, dann wird es bald traurig um unser geliebtes Deutschland aussehen. Das bewies dann auch der unselige Vertrag von Versailles.”; Marta Gruse, accessed September 19, 2019,

<https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58573/span-classqueryhlmartaspanspan-classqueryhlgru?ctx=96dd8611-8481-4c31-bd2b-157de92e0da1&idx=0>.

¹³⁵ “Jenen Freikorpsführern, die noch retten wollten, was zu retten war, schloss ich mich an und ging als Soldat nach Oberschlesien.”; Richard Quack, accessed September 19, 2019,

<https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58499/span-classqueryhlrichardspanspan-classqueryhlq?ctx=4d959ce5-2c1e-44eb-b369-90adbd5969cb&idx=0>.

¹³⁶ “Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass gerade von Oberschlesien aus, diesen damaligen in jüdischem Solde stehenden Machthabern schon der Garaus gemacht worden wäre, wenn nur die Möglichkeit bestanden hätte.”

¹³⁷ See: Juliane Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien: der Kampf um die Erinnerung in Deutschland und in Polen 1919-1956* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2008), could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

¹³⁸ “Wenn die sozialdemokratische Berliner Regierung den General Höfer nicht in den Arm gefallen wäre, so hätten unsere braven Selbstschutzleute die Insurgenten über die Grenze gejagt.”; Max Rudolph, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58793/span-classqueryhlmaxspanspan-classqueryhlrudol?ctx=0e0cc75c-4a2d-47bf-943f-4a9e2d159493&idx=0>.

narrower boundaries than could be defended, the *Grenzschutz* had had to withdraw behind the Versailles borders. Similarly let down by the government's lack of support for a defensible position, Wilhelm Lembke from Bromberg related, "One day it was said that Polish insurgents had occupied Posen and Hohensalza and were marching on Bromberg. Soldiers, who were still ready to fight, were in short supply and thus the *Grenzschutz* and citizens' militias were mobilized. Reinforcements requested from Berlin, that is, from the government, did not come. I did not understand this conduct, for if one had had the intention to hold Posen province, it would have been a trifle." For this reason, he recalled, his "loyalty and faith began to totter-."¹³⁹

A few men hoped to get the chance to redress the territorial losses incurred by a weak-willed government by joining the army. After his family was expelled from West Prussia and took up residence in Brandenburg, for instance, Walter Treue enlisted as a soldier "in order to surely be able to be there when it comes to the getting back of the *Heimat*."¹⁴⁰ "In the belief that one day the decision will after all come and that we will take back by force what they have stolen from us," Willi Scharf too wrote of the time following his family's expulsion, "I signed up voluntarily for the army in order to be trained in case of a conflict."¹⁴¹ He left again, however, when he realized that no such

¹³⁹ "Eines Tages hiess es, polnische Insurgenten hätten Posen und Hohensalza besetzt und seien im Anmarsch auf Bromberg. Soldaten, die noch kampfbereit waren, waren wenig vorhanden und so wurden Grenzschutz und Einwohnerwehren mobilisiert. Von Berlin, d.h. von der Regierung erbetene Verstärkungen kamen nicht heran. Das ganze Gebühren war mir nicht klar, denn wenn man die Absicht gehabt hätte, die Provinz Posen zu halten, wäre es eine Kleinigkeit gewesen. Und wieder gerieten Treue und Glauben ins Wanken—."; Wilhelm Lembke, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58498/span-classqueryhlwilhelmspan-span-classqueryhl?ctx=3fc101b8-3b6a-4941-8ed7-f1f622ae8c5b&idx=0>.

¹⁴⁰ "Doch ich wollte durchaus Soldat werden, um ja gleich dabei sein zu können wenn es ans zurückholen der Heimat ging."; Walter Treue, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58538/span-classqueryhlwalterspan-span-classqueryhltr?ctx=c36d008d-f6b5-49cc-96b5-bf0fe22fa212&idx=0>.

¹⁴¹ "In dem Glauben, daß eines Tages doch die Entscheidung kommen wird und wir mit Gewalt uns das zurückholen das man uns gestohlen hatte, meldete ich mich freiwillig bei der Reichswehr um im Falle einer Auseinandersetzung ausgebildet zu sein."; Willi Scharf, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58655/span-classqueryhlwillispan-span-classqueryhlsch?ctx=ce423b6c-54fc-455f-aff2-1c1d590ffda9&idx=0>.

campaign would be fought anytime soon. Roland Schoenfelder, meanwhile, dedicated himself to the building up of the illegal Black *Reichswehr* in Eastern Germany, whose task, he held, was the organization of men and materiel for the defense of Germany's Eastern borders from "the imminent danger of a Polish invasion."¹⁴² The Black *Reichswehr*, he opined, was "in the Eastern marches...the foundation of National Socialism."¹⁴³

Economic troubles, on the regional and personal level, precipitated by the post-war settlement also weighed on respondents. Already, the pecuniary plight expellees reported undergoing has been outlined: They had to abandon jobs, belongings, and real estate. Texts sent in from the Rhine-Ruhr areas even more often detailed how the Franco-Belgian occupation, punishments for resistance to it, and exile derailed individuals' careers. The economic dynamics the unfavorable peace treaty produced in Germany's other borderlands were likewise held responsible for individual travails. Max Rudolph, who had relocated to Upper Silesia in 1918 to work as a chemist for the *Friedenshütte*, was, after a stint as the operator of an independent lab, employed from 1922 onwards by the *Königs- and Laurahütte*, now in Poland. When he refused Polish citizenship in 1924, he was expelled. He settled in Beuthen and opened a private laboratory again, but "through the relinquishing of the most valuable parts of Upper Silesia" too few commissions were coming in.¹⁴⁴ Rudolph had to sell and moved to Berlin, where he, after a spell of unemployment, worked in quick succession as a lab technician at the technical university, the founder of a short-lived rechargeable battery firm, and a lecturing assistant at the university. This employment insecurity he blamed on Germany's territorial reduction. Georg Deutscher similarly had to give up his career in the administration of

¹⁴² "die naheliegende Gefahr des Poleneinmarsches"; Roland Schoenfelder, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58800/roland-span-classqueryhlschoenfelderspan?ctx=a2de450d-ddbc-4871-b4c9-669e821a2513&idx=0>.

¹⁴³ "in der Ostmark [...] der Grundstock des Nationalsozialismus"; Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Durch die Abtretung der wertvollsten Teile Oberschlesiens kamen nicht mehr genügend Aufträge ein."; Max Rudolph, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58793/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhrlrudol?ctx=0e0cc75c-4a2d-47bf-943f-4a9e2d159493&idx=0>.

the same foundry, where his father had also been a miner, when it moved its headquarters from Berlin to Poland.¹⁴⁵ While he landed a civil service job, G. Ullein from Tilsit was less fortunate. Born in 1907, he began his biogram with a tribute to the Tilsit of his childhood, a flourishing center of trade between the German and Russian empires. Since, however, the “’peace treaty’” had crippled the city.¹⁴⁶ Customs barriers and the “mean-spirited attitudes” of the new surrounding countries curbed the city’s trade and wealth.¹⁴⁷ “And now,” he lamented, “many young people have like me to leave their jobs in order to get a different job in the province and the *Reich*.”¹⁴⁸ He laid his difficulties firmly at the feet specifically of the peace settlement. While the above men cited the economic repercussions the post-war order had for them personally when asked why they became Nazis, others were galvanized by the disruption to the borderlands’ economies more generally. Max Reimann, for one, was stationed in Upper Silesia as a civil servant from 1920 to 1922, where his assignment included ensuring that coal was delivered to Poland, Italy, and Czechoslovakia as mandated by the peace treaty.¹⁴⁹ The task embittered him. Toward the end of the decade, Oskar Klinkusch too spent time professionally in Upper Silesia and there witnessed “the blessings of the ‘peace treaty’.”¹⁵⁰

It was then that Klinkusch “resolved to join the NSDAP in order thus to do my part for the liberation of the fatherland.”¹⁵¹ Keim from the Palatinate likewise linked his

¹⁴⁵ Georg Deutscher, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58525/span-classqueryhlgeorgspan-span-classqueryhldeu?ctx=fddc5739-e4d6-4a83-a846-6214ae18fc88&idx=0>.

¹⁴⁶ “’Friedensvertrag’”; G. Ullein, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58396/g-span-classqueryhlulleinspan?ctx=f488b5b8-8e0d-4696-910f-941f4d694ce3&idx=0>.

¹⁴⁷ “engherzige Auffassungen”; Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Und nun geht es vielen junger [sic] Menschen wie mir, sie müssen ihren Arbeitsplatz verlassen, um sich in der ‘Provinz’ bzw. im ‘Reich’ einen anderen Arbeitsplatz zu verschaffen.”; Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Max Reimann, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58329/span-classqueryhlmaxspan-span-classqueryhlreima?ctx=93a0c38f-f3b9-4e5a-b8e6-774a5c9e2103&idx=0>.

¹⁵⁰ “die Segnungen des ‘Friedensvertrages’”; Oskar Klinkusch, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58569/oskar-span-classqueryhlklinkuschspan?ctx=9fd387a3-6442-4fb6-8ac9-addffc792b8c&idx=0>.

¹⁵¹ “...und jetzt entschloss ich mich, der NSDAP beizutreten, um so zu meinem Teil an der Befreiung meines Vaterlandes mitzuarbeiten.”; Ibid.

becoming a party member to his border experiences, writing that “if a liberation of Germany was possible, only Adolf Hitler could implement it.”¹⁵² South German Martin Daiser, the author of a 1930 polemic detailing his experience as a worker in Upper Silesia in 1920, also experienced his political awakening thanks to the ethnic and political circumstances of that borderland. He had arrived a Communist, but the sole fellow German in Daiser’s mine, Heinrich, set him right: “Heinrich and I became ever better friends, for in this goddamned nest one could observe every day, after all, that many, many years would pass until that time when the words “Proletarians of all nations unite!’ would one day have become reality – and that probably the end of the world would have arrived already before then. In the meantime, it would remain a phrase like so many others, which as usual the German proletarian had fallen for. I had to agree with Heinrich when he said: ‘Well, there should be a party, better yet a movement, that is German and nevertheless social; first the Germans must become brothers, all, all...’”¹⁵³ The efficaciousness of this national unity they envisaged was confirmed in his eyes when a German train and a French military transport crashed and the unified defense of all the city’s Germans against the resulting anti-German terror allowed them to briefly gain control of Katowice.¹⁵⁴ Most forthrightly, August Marleiter concluded his biogram with the affirmation, “I believe that precisely my borderland experiences have led me to the

¹⁵² “...dass, wenn eine Befreiung Deutschlands möglich war, diese nur Adolf Hitler durchführen konnte.”; Keim, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58404/span-classqueryhlkeimspan?ctx=cb3ca610-5fc5-4683-b1db-64aa6ba77390&idx=0>.

¹⁵³ “Heinrich und ich wurden immer bessere Freunde, denn hier in diesem gottverfluchten Nest konnte man ja jeden Tag feststellen, daß bis zu dem Zeitpunkt, an dem die Worte ‘Proletarier aller Länder vereinigt Euch!’ einmal Wirklichkeit geworden sein würden noch viele, viele Jahre vergehen dürften - und wahrscheinlich das Ende der Welt schon vorher herbeigekommen sein würde. Einstweilen bliebe es eine Phrase wie so viele andere auch, auf die wie immer der deutsche Proletarier hereingefallen war. Ich musste Heinrich recht geben, wenn er sagte: ‘Ja, eine Partei, besser noch eine Bewegung müsste es geben, die deutsch und doch sozial eingestellt wäre; die Deutschen müssten selbst erst Brüder werden, alle, alle...’”; Martin Daiser, “Deutsche Brüder in Not: Selbsterlebtes aus dem Polenaufstand im oberschlesischen Abstimmungsgebiet 1920,” [1930]. BArch, NS 26/629.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

N.S.D.A.P.”¹⁵⁵ Others did not articulate this connection between borderland experiences and Nazi membership explicitly, with it instead an undercurrent in narratives that are, after all, designed to explain “Why I Became a Nazi.” While this emphasis on the border may in some cases have been contrived to arouse sympathy in the biograms’ readership, on the whole it challenges the conventional assertion that regionally specific issues and perspectives played no appreciable role in the political outlook of borderlands electorates.

On many borderlanders, it is clear, the border and the upheavals surrounding it – before, during, and particularly after the First World War – had a formative impact. By highlighting Germany’s and Germandom’s vulnerability they attracted respondents to radical nationalism. However, none of them came to the NSDAP directly from post-war paramilitaries like the leadership figures and the party’s early core, which form the focus of extant scholarship about Nazism’s emergence in the borderlands, did. In fact, many had never engaged in any formal border-related activism at all. Instead, they tended to take more circuitous routes to Nazism, with border experiences acting as a long-range influence rather than as a direct feeder into the party. It was sensibilities like theirs that Nazism was catering to when it, as the next chapter will showcase, participated in the commemoration of post-war activism surrounding the borders.

¹⁵⁵ “Ich glaube, daß gerade meine Grenzlanderlebnisse mich mit zur N.S.D.A.P. geführt haben.”; August Marleiter, accessed September 18, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=5e111d47-774a-4fa1-8590-ddbf637551e9&idx=0>.

Colonizing Memory Culture

Many later Nazis were shaped, as the previous chapter has suggested, by their experience of the borders' precarity and in particular of the resultant post-war plebiscitary and paramilitary struggles for their preservation. The centrality of these events to collective memory and nationalist mythology in the border regions led the Nazi movement to insinuate itself into their commemoration. In doing so, the movement laid claim, much like it famously also did with the frontline experience, to a heritage with which the NSDAP as an organization did not in actuality possess a direct or unique connection.¹ Mostly, this appropriation occurred organically as Nazi activists, themselves products of their regions' memory cultures, disseminated their political ideology within their existing networks, a process that Rudy Koshar has identified, in a different setting, as key to the party's breakthrough in the early 1930s. Cooperation in matters of commemoration with other right-wing, nationalist groups was thus usually unproblematic, as was participation in collective commemorative ceremonies. Even commemorations organized specifically by the party imitated existing custom. The Nazi movement did, however, claim for itself not only origins in the post-war struggles but also a continued special relationship with their spirit, which, it maintained, it alone, with its mass character and uniquely uncompromising, activist nationalism, preserved and could rekindle more widely for the achievement of irredentist ends. These pretensions were employed to juxtapose the Nazi party on the one hand to the government and its constituent parties, which were held to have failed then as now, but also on the other to rival radical-nationalist organizations with roots in the post-war conflicts. These were in rare but notable instances taken over outright by the Nazis as their movement rapidly

¹ Mirosław Węcki, "Losy górnośląskich nazistów podczas I wojny światowej," in *Górny śląsk a I wojna światowa*, eds. Jarosław Raciński and Michał J. Witkowski (Katowice: Muzeum śląskie, 2016), 180.

gained ground. Strength thus became both the rhetorical and the practical foundation of Nazism's colonization of a memory culture that it otherwise shared largely unchanged with the wider right-wing milieu.

Rudy Koshar spotlighted the “interpenetration of nazism [sic] into prior social networks” of the right in his 1986 monograph *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935*.² Arguing against the popular perception, dating back to Max Weber, that it was the political passivity of Germany's voluntary groups that smoothed the way for Nazism's rise, Koshar emphasized that it was to the contrary precisely the politicization of the bourgeois associational realm that made Nazism's electoral successes of the early 1930s possible and lasting.³ Marburg had long been, he describes, a right-wing bastion, a circumstance that would eventually give rise to Nazi vote shares well above the national average.⁴ In 1929, however, the town's political stage was still dominated by a cluster of organizationally weak conservative-nationalist parties favored by a bourgeoisie that held a “deep distrust of bureaucratized parties linked to large constituencies,” like the Social Democrats, and of party politics' perceived intrusion into public life.⁵ In this atmosphere, clubs and associations acted as “substructures' of more visible parties, pressure groups, and city governments” that, while ostensibly unpolitical, fostered engagement with politics.⁶ How the Nazi movement interacted with this important “intermediary structure” between social and political life, Koshar urged, deserves more scrutiny.⁷ Steps in that direction had, Koshar points out, already been taken, with William Sheridan Allen in his famous case study of Northeim recognizing its penetration of associational life as prerequisite for Nazism's success there.⁸ Since long

² Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*

before joining that party, eventual Nazis, Koshar showed, had been members of various societies, such that later they were not so much infiltrating these as “Nazi party involvement was part of ongoing social intercourse.”⁹ Gradually, Nazis affiliated with other groups gained “moral authority over [these] organizations” and the Nazi party, in turn, became “the political hub, the focus of legitimacy and material power, that bourgeois constituencies,” with their proclivity for weak parties, “had lacked.”¹⁰ All the while, the circumstance that the party apparatus neither planned nor steered these joint members’ dissemination of Nazism only “enhanced the legitimacy of their message.”¹¹ Koshar credits the effects of “cross-affiliation” not only with producing the sizeable vote shares the Nazi party won in Marburg in 1930 but also with ensuring that this outcome did not remain a one-off occurrence in an unstable, ever-changing political landscape.¹² Alongside the sports clubs, choirs, student and interest groups, and veterans’ associations, whose suffusion with Nazism Koshar studied, in the borderlands organizations that claimed stewardship of the post-war struggles’ legacy were part and parcel of right-wing associational life. It is therefore worth examining how the movement “grappled, negotiated, and clashed” with these groups and engaged with the heritage they represented.¹³

Nazism often harked back to highlights of German history – notably moments of activist mass nationalism like the popular response to war’s outbreak in 1914, the subsequent frontline experience, or even the farther back Wars of Liberation of 1813 – to endow itself with a nationalist genealogy. In the borderlands, this cobbled-together backstory prominently included specifically border-related historical events, particularly the post-war struggles but occasionally also ones like Germans’ uprising against Danish rule in 1848. The myth of borderland Nazism’s origin in those campaigns was

⁹ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰ Ibid., 202.

¹¹ Ibid., 203.

¹² Ibid., 202.

¹³ Ibid., 11.

occasionally articulated quite explicitly, notably by Flensburg's *Kampfzeit* Hitler Youth leader. In his mid-1930s chronicle of the *Grenzjugendbund Germania*, which had been the nucleus of the city's Hitler Youth, he declared that in 1920, the year of the Schleswig plebiscite, the NSDAP as a party had not yet spread to Flensburg, but that "the swastika banner was already carried" by him and his comrades in the *Germania*.¹⁴ "Only out of the *Germania* did the freedom party NSDAP later develop',"¹⁵ he asserted, writing also that, "He who wants to understand Flensburg, its National Socialist movement, has to know about these days of struggle and victory [in the plebiscite period]. He must know that the activists of that time were also the activists of the National Socialist *Kampfzeit*."¹⁶ Indeed the *Germania* had been the successor to the Excentric Club, an association of teens, among them the author, active in the German plebiscite campaign,¹⁷ and had in 1930, after many years of independent Hitlerite activism, merged itself into the Hitler Youth as Flensburg's first chapter, which retained the byname *Germania*.¹⁸ The *Grenzjugendbund* had moreover contributed numerous founding members to the city's NSDAP and SA branches.¹⁹ The chronicle's portrayal of Nazism's genesis in Flensburg thus contained some truth, even if the mass of Nazi members would not have had the same pedigree of plebiscite activism as the *Germania*-incubated leadership. At the dedication of Oppeln's Brown House, *Gauleiter* Helmuth Brückner likewise worked with half-truths when he "reminded" his roughly 3,000 listeners that "the root of the Upper Silesian Hitler movement was formed from the *Freikorps* Heydebreck, which defended

¹⁴ "Im Jahre 1920 wurde von uns bereits das Hakenkreuzbanner geführt. Eine Partei NSDAP gab es hier noch gar nicht. Erst aus der Germania ist später die Freiheitspartei NSDAP hervorgegangen."; Peter Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg* (Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte, 1986), 244.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Wer Flensburg, seine nationalsozialistische Bewegung kennen will, muß um diese Tage des Kampfes und des Sieges wissen. Er muß wissen, daß die Aktivisten jener Zeit auch die Aktivisten der nationalsozialistischen Kampfzeit waren."; *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 244, 251.

this part of German land in the time of the uprising.”²⁰ While Peter von Heydebreck himself had indeed gone on to found Upper Silesia’s SA in 1925, to claim that his *Freikorps* had been the nucleus of Upper Silesian Nazism was to exaggerate.²¹ The symbols of the *Selbstschutz* were at times appropriated as well. Thus, an SA leader carried a *Selbstschutz* flag in a 1932 parade near Gleiwitz, for which he was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment before winning the appeal,²² and a police raid on SA offices in Cosel that same year found over a thousand *Selbstschutz* armbands.²³

Selbstschutz memorials, meanwhile, were often focal points for Nazi rallies, as sometimes were memorials to earlier episodes. When an SA motorcade headed from Kiel to Flensburg for a *Deutscher Tag* there, for instance, it stopped to pay its respects at a monument dedicated to the “sons of our *Heimat* fallen in the fight against Denmark” in 1850. Two Upper Silesian celebrations of the so-called *Reichstrauertag*, however, illustrate *Selbstschutz* memorials’ particular prominence.²⁴ On the 1930 *Reichstrauertag*, an annual day of remembrance observed by the Nazi movement on November 9, the day of the failed Munich putsch, to commemorate its dead, Gleiwitz’s Nazis laid down a wreath at the local cemetery’s *Selbstschutz* memorial. Police, led by a violent and anti-Nazi constable, wantonly beat up and arrested participants, the Nazi press alleged.²⁵ It was the following year’s *Reichstrauertag* celebration in nearby Beuthen, however, that

²⁰ “Gauleiter Helmuth Brückner begrüßte die ihm vertrauten oberschlesischen Kameraden und erinnerte daran, daß der Stamm der oberschlesischen Hitlerbewegung aus dem Freikorps Heydebreck gebildet wurde, das diesen Teil deutschen Landes in der Aufstandszeit verteidigt habe.”; “Die Einweihung des ‘Braunen Hauses’,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, August 24, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

²¹ Juliane Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien: Der Kampf um die Erinnerung in Deutschland und in Polen 1919-1956* (Osnabrück: fibre, 2008), 155; see also: Bolko Janus, *Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933* (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 163-164.

²² “Schlesien: Ein ungültiges Fahnenverbot: Die Selbstschutzfahne von Schönwald,” *Schlesische Zeitung*, March 24, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

²³ Report, March 21, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

²⁴ “im Kampfe gegen Dänemark gefallenen Söhne unserer Heimat”; “Der ‘Deutsche Tag’,” *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, July 23, 1932.

²⁵ “‘Gummiknüppel raus! Ihr..., wollt ihr nicht schärfer zufassen?’,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, November 15, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

really made journalistic waves. Having been prohibited from holding their commemoration at the town's *Selbstschutz* monument, Beuthen's NSDAP chapter simply laid a wreath there during the march to the main ceremony at the cemetery. On their way back, one SA man successfully asked a police officer's permission to have his photograph taken with the memorial. When he took off his coat for the photo to reveal full SA uniform, the officer intervened on the basis of the uniform ban in place at the time. The SA man was taken to the nearest police station amid violent Nazi protests and, though he was let go once his uniform had been confiscated,²⁶ this caused the Upper Silesian far-right press to rail against the police's supposed terror against nationalists.²⁷ Both incidents, apart from their journalistic repercussions, are notable for Nazis' honoring of the slain of the *Selbstschutz* on a day dedicated to the memory of Nazism's fallen. By appropriating ceremonies, symbols, and rhetoric in this manner, the Nazis invested their movement with a prestigious backstory.

Among the associations that likewise claimed that heritage, Nazism by the early 1930s had gained traction. Gleiwitz's branch of the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, for example, was in 1931 in charge of the town's celebration of the plebiscite's tenth anniversary and its rightist majority voted, twice, to invite Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, a former *Freikorps* leader and one-time National Socialist, as the keynote speaker. When the branch's Social Democratic and Centrist members as well as *Oberpräsident* Lukaschek protested, the headquarters of the *Verbände* turned the commemoration's organization over to the municipality, which arranged for Gleiwitz's erstwhile plebiscite commissar, who also happened to be a veteran of St Anne Mountain, to speak. While the republicans' intervention did prevent the appearance of a far-right orator with a Nazi connection at the rally, the episode also exposed the rift within the

²⁶ "Polizei und Nazis am Selbstschutzdenkmal: Zwei Darstellungen," *Allgemeiner Lokal-Anzeiger*, November 11, 1931. APO, RO, 1804.

²⁷ "Beuthener Polizei gegen Nationalsozialisten," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, November 10, 1931. APO, RO, 1804; "Beuthener Polizei gegen Nationalsozialisten," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, November 11, 1931. APO, RO, 1804.

branch and the predominance of Nazi sympathies in it.²⁸ Similarly, the branch of the *Vereinigte Verbände* in Spandau, though it was not in the borderland, came under Nazi sway. The Abel respondent Eduard Holema related how he in 1926 took over the roughly 150-strong group from a Marxist predecessor and set about “reshaping it in a nationalist spirit.”²⁹ From 1929, Holema explicitly advocated for Nazism, in response to which many quit the chapter. Yet by 1931 half the board’s members were Nazis and by the time of Hitler’s takeover more than half the ordinary members too were registered Nazis or sympathizers, by Holema’s account.³⁰ Just as in Gleiwitz, Nazism had gained the ascendancy within the nationalist Upper Silesian association.

Movement between the NSDAP and the wider *Selbstschutz* milieu was fluid, precipitated in particular by intra-party conflicts and bans of the party. In 1926, less than a year after the NSDAP’s re-founding, for example, malcontents in Beuthen, excluded by the *Ortsgruppenleiter*, set up a branch of the *Völkischer Frontkriegerbund* instead, declaring their organization the alternative chosen by “former *Selbstschutz* and frontline fighters” in the face of the NSDAP branch’s “fragmentation.”³¹ In 1932, when the party was far more established, a similar schism occurred in nearby Hindenburg. A government report noted that the exclusion of a local *Sturmabteilungsführer* had led numerous SA men to leave the SA branch and instead join the *Bund ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer*, which became a “receptive reservoir for dissatisfied elements of the SA.”³² In times of prohibition, meanwhile, the nationalist associational realm often provided cover for Nazi activism, as when Ernst Schmitt, an Abel respondent, re-established his local Nazi party

²⁸ Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien*, 150-151.

²⁹ “im nationalen Sinne umzugestalten”; Eduard Holema, accessed September 24, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58513/span-classqueryhleduardspan-span-classqueryhlho?ctx=9579ad3b-e04d-4f00-9c80-df2d174b1e56&idx=0>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “die ehemaligen Selbstschutz- und Frontkämpfer,” “Zersplitterung”; “Betrifft: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei und Tannenbund,” January 13, 1926. APO, NPO, 989.

³² “Aufnahmereservoir für unzufriedene Elemente der SA.”; “Politische Einstellung des Selbstschutztraditionsvereins ‘Bund ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer, Sitz Hindenburg.’,” February 10, 1932. APO, NPO, 1000.

branch in Landsberg an der Warthe under the designation *Grenzschutz-Ost* in 1923.³³ When chancellor von Papen banned the SA in the spring of 1932, Wilhelm Pisarski, founder and head of the *Verein ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer Beuthen O/S.-Nord*, endeavored with some success to absorb Beuthen's former SA men into his organization.³⁴ Pisarski's *Verein ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer* was, actually, an example not only of a substitute in hard times but also of discontents splitting off from the party. Having fought in the First World War and in the defense of Beuthen from Polish insurgency in 1921, Pisarski had turned his former *Selbstschutz* division into a *Traditionscompagnie*, which was, however, disbanded after an assault on a member of the Polish minority in 1926.³⁵ Government reports suggest that he formed a new *Traditionscompagnie* the following year out of the *Selbstschutz* veterans' section of Beuthen's *Frontkriegerbund*.³⁶ After this second *Traditionscompagnie* was disbanded in 1928 following its violent dispersing of a Polish-Catholic School Association parent-teacher meeting,³⁷ Pisarski joined the NSDAP, becoming head of the local SA *Sturm* and a city councilor for the party.³⁸ The archival record is somewhat confused as to when precisely he left the party. In 1930, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against him for engaging in Nazi activism as a civil servant and, it is recorded, he was excluded from the party for having a criminal record due to his failure to comply with weapons possession laws.³⁹ Meanwhile it is also recorded that in 1931 Pisarski and *Ortsgruppenleiter* Koch were in conflict, with Koch openly wishing to oust Pisarski and Pisarski in turn threatening that the SA would no longer provide *Saalschutz* for party

³³ Ernst Schmitt, 4.

³⁴ "Betrifft: Wiederaufnahme des ausgeschlossenen Magistratsassistenten Pisarski, Beuthen, in der NSDAP," June 27, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

³⁵ Report, November 13, 1932. APO, NPO, 1000.

³⁶ "Betrifft: Frontkriegerbund," May 20, 1927. APO, NPO, 990.

³⁷ Oberschlesischer Grenzbericht für den Monat März 1928. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 593.

³⁸ Report, November 13, 1932. APO, NPO, 1000.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

events.⁴⁰ By 1932 he was certainly no longer a member of the NSDAP, nor did he ever renew his membership before 1933.⁴¹ Instead he had founded the aforementioned *Verein ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer Beuthen O/S.-Nord*, which numbered 280 members by late 1932,⁴² among whom Pisarski “promoted National Socialism unceasingly.”⁴³ Reportedly, his promotion bore fruit. While there seem to have been no formal ties between the *Verein* and SA, informal cooperation did occur, with Pisarski and his veterans for instance attending the swearing-in of new SA men in early 1932.⁴⁴

With this competitive but in many ways like-minded nationalist associational domain, Nazism shared practices aimed at celebrating and reinforcing the Germandom of the borderlands. One such practice were the so-called *Deutsche Abende*, politicized showcases of folk culture popularized by the *Ostmarkenverein* before the war and current by then among *völkisch*-nationalist groups across Germany.⁴⁵ In the borderlands these evenings were sometimes hosted as stand-alone affairs, such as one held by the local NSDAP chapter in December 1929 in the Border Province’s Schönlanke,⁴⁶ but also frequently in conjunction with rallies, such as during the 1930 day-long set of events hosted by the *Stahlhelm* in Eastern Pomeranian Varzin to protest alleged Polish territorial greed⁴⁷ or at a 1932 regional SA gathering in Flensburg.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, the *Freie Kieler Studentenschaft*, the University of Kiel’s umbrella organization for fraternities, began attending the Knivsberg festival, a celebration of Germandom in northern

⁴⁰ “Betrifft: Unstimmigkeiten zwischen der SA. und der Ortsgruppe der NSDAP. in Beuthen,” May 6, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

⁴¹ Report, November 13, 1932. APO, NPO, 1000.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “unablässig für den Nationalsozialismus wirbt”; “Betrifft: Wiederaufnahme des ausgeschlossenen Magistratsassistenten Pisarski, Beuthen, in der NSDAP,” June 27, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode, “Die Wende zum Nationalsozialismus im südlichen Ostpreußen 1930-1932. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Masurertums,” *Olsztynskie Studia Niemcoznawcze* (1986): 107.

⁴⁶ Advertisement, *Schönlancker Zeitung*, December 14, 1929. APP, Oddział w Pile, Zbiory czasopismo 12/4.

⁴⁷ “Stahlhelmaufmarsch in Hammermühle und Varzin,” *Zeitung für Ostpommern*, [December 2] 1930. APK, RK, 4364.

⁴⁸ “Der ‘Deutsche Tag’,” *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, July 23, 1932.

Schleswig held annually since 1894,⁴⁹ as a group in 1931, having come under the leadership of the National Socialist German Students League in mid-1930.⁵⁰ That first year, the borderland division of the *Studentenschaft* sold around 250 subsidized tickets and the participating students, apart from taking part in the wider festival, held their own “Versailles rally” on the Knivsberg.⁵¹ They returned the following year in order to, as an advertisement in the *Studentenschaft*’s magazine urged, “show the severed Germandom in North Schleswig that the German people stands behind it in loyalty”⁵² and by 1933 the festival had become a celebration not just of North Schleswig’s Germandom but of its rapidly deepening Nazism.⁵³

The most crucial item in the borderlands’ nationalist repertoire, though, were commemorations of plebiscites and battles and while Nazis held their own such ceremonies on occasion, they also often engaged with others’ celebrations. *De rigueur* across most of the political spectrum, though with widely varying emphases and messages, Upper Silesian *völkisch* groups had held anti-Polish rallies on the anniversary of the plebiscite since the early 1920s,⁵⁴ while ministers including the SPD’s Carl Severing participated in the five-year anniversary in Oppeln.⁵⁵ Severing also spoke five years later at the central commemoration of the plebiscite’s tenth anniversary as did chancellor Brüning. Across the Reich, federal and Prussian government agencies flew flags on half-mast and across Upper Silesia three minutes of silence were kept at noon in all public spaces.⁵⁶ Petitioned by the *Vereinigte Verbände*, Breslau’s archbishop ordered

⁴⁹ “Das Knivsbergfest,” Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.bdn.dk/knivsbergfest.46097.aspx>.

⁵⁰ “Ergebnis der Kammerwahl,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*, July 12, 1930. SHLB.

⁵¹ “Versailleskundgebung”; “Knivsbergfahrt 1931,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*, July 20, 1931. SHLB.

⁵² “dem abgetrennten Deutschtum in Nordschleswig zu zeigen, daß das deutsche Volk in Treue hinter ihm steht”; “Achtung! Knivsbergfahrt!,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*, June 16, 1932. SHLB.

⁵³ Letter from the German consulate in Åbenrå, April 12, 1933. PA AA, Referat 117, Apenrade Box 9.

⁵⁴ Bolko Janus, *Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933* (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 158-160.

⁵⁵ Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien*, 127.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

all Catholic churches to ring their bells at 11:30 am on the day of the anniversary.⁵⁷ In May of that year, the ten-year anniversary of the legendary battle for St Anne Mountain was honored with a separate ceremony, in which National Socialists participated alongside *Selbstschutz* veterans, the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, and the Center Party's *Kreuzschar*, though they booed when *Oberpräsident* Lukaschek spoke.⁵⁸

Borderland Nazi newspapers' reporting on occasions like the much-celebrated tenth Upper Silesian plebiscite anniversary drew on and praised other groups' work. The Nazi *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, for instance, published the text of a telegram sent in honor of the anniversary by the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, the conservative-led successor to the plebiscite era's central campaigning organization, which compared the two regions for both having been torn asunder despite German referendum victories and assured Upper Silesia of the solidarity of Germany's other "border tribes."⁵⁹ Anniversaries of Schleswig's own plebiscites were similarly accompanied by sympathetic coverage on the part of the *Tageszeitung* of commemorative work done by other nationalist groups and individuals. The Nazi paper, for example, reprinted an interview that Pastor Schmidt-Wodder, the German minority's representative in the Danish parliament, had done with the *Nationaltidende* under the title "We demand border revision!"⁶⁰ Schmidt-Wodder's speech at a plebiscite commemoration in Kiel the following February, which had been organized by North Schleswig's *Wohlfahrts- und Schulverein* in cooperation with the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland*, and the *Verein Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger*, was also reported approvingly.⁶¹ Ceremonies held in Schleswig, Kiel, and Flensburg on March 14,

⁵⁷ Janus, *Germans and Poles*, 166-167.

⁵⁸ Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien*, 122.

⁵⁹ "Grenzstämme"; "An Oberschlesien: Gruß der Nordmark," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, March 24, 1931.

⁶⁰ "Wir fordern Grenzrevision!," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, February 11, 1930.

⁶¹ "Abstimmungsgedenkfeier in Kiel," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, February 11, 1931.

1930, the tenth anniversary of the day of the southern zone's plebiscite, under the auspices of municipalities, the *Verein Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger*, and the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* received positive coverage as well,⁶² and the *Tageszeitung* again printed a commemorative text by Pastor Schmidt-Wodder.⁶³ The commemorative celebrations in Flensburg and Kiel in March of the following year, when speakers, in the same vein as the above-mentioned telegram, congratulated Upper Silesia on the tenth anniversary of its plebiscite victory and pronounced Schleswig's referendums forerunners for those in the East, were likewise reported on favorably.⁶⁴

Expressly National Socialist commemorative content was, in contrast, sporadic. On the tenth anniversary of the Upper Silesian referendum, the East Prussian party organ *Preußische Zeitung* did, for instance, run excerpts from the Nazi sympathizer Arnolt Bronnen's 1929 novel *O.S.*⁶⁵ In these extracts from Bronnen's literary glorification of the *Freikorps'* fight against Polish insurgency a Southern Tyrolean volunteer gives each Pole he kills the new Italian name of one of his home region's towns, signifying the interlinked nature of the border struggles.⁶⁶ Other articles merely threw in platitudinous invocations of Nazism's commitment to the borderlands and to irredentism. One piece about the post-plebiscite suffering of North Schleswig's Germans concluded, for instance, "We in the *Reich*, particularly we National Socialists, intend not to forget our borderlands over day-to-day politics and more than ever to show our brothers outside through deeds that we stand with them loyally" and recommended sponsoring a *Tageszeitung* subscription for a minority school or association as a way of keeping that promise.⁶⁷ Another concluded with the declaration that, "Theirs is our loyalty, which we

⁶² "Abstimmungsfeiern," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, March 15, 1930.

⁶³ "Zum 14. März," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, March 14, 1930.

⁶⁴ "Die Feiern des 14. März," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, March 17, 1931.

⁶⁵ "Grüße der Stadt Tilsit an Oberschlesien," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 21, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁶ "Vom Kampf um die oberschlesische Erde," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 21, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁷ "Wir aber im Reich, vor allem wir Nationalsozialisten, wollen über der Tagespolitik unsere Grenzlande nicht vergessen und mehr wie je durch die Tat unseren Brüdern draußen zeigen, daß wir treu zu ihnen stehen.;" "Zum 10. Februar," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, February 9, 1930.

National Socialists believe we can best demonstrate through our struggle for the National Socialist Greater Germany, in which all German minorities will once be united with the motherland. That is our vow on March 14!”⁶⁸ These perfunctory remarks did little to mask that plebiscite commemoration was essentially an area in which the Nazi movement did not differentiate itself from the right-wing nationalist mainstream.

Though the party did not veer from accepted right-wing commemorative norms, it did incorporate the hosting of independent plebiscite and battle commemorations into its propagandistic repertoire. A particularly well-documented Nazi commemoration of this kind took place in Masurian Lyck in July 1931. Planned to coincide with a visit to the small town by the East Prussian NSDAP’s popular Fusel band, Lyck’s SA leadership planned to hold a ceremony at the memorial stones dedicated to the plebiscite with the band and the SA in white shirts, if permission to sport uniform attire in public could be bullied out of the police.⁶⁹ Such authorization was apparently not obtained, for the rally, preceded by a propaganda march through town, was in the end a ticketed affair, held in the Nazis’ preferred meeting hall in Lyck. There, 1,200 supporters gathered to hear the speaker Matuczys, who urged his audience to fight the Young plan, a controversial reparations payment scheme, with the same unity and determination that they had shown during the plebiscite campaign.⁷⁰ In Upper Silesia, the St Anne Mountain was a site of memory particularly prominently assimilated by the Nazi movement. In May 1931, the National Socialists not only participated in the official ten-year anniversary celebration there, but alongside the *Stahlhelm* also hosted separate commemorations in various small towns near the mountain,⁷¹ taking the opportunity to expound far-right views on the

⁶⁸ “Unsere Treue gilt ihnen, die wir Nationalsozialisten glauben nicht besser beweisen zu können, als im Kampf für das nationalsozialistische Großdeutschland, in dem alle deutschen Minderheiten dereinst mit dem Mutterland vereint sein werden. Das ist unser Gelöbnis zum 14. März!”; “Zum 14. März,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, March 14, 1930.

⁶⁹ Bericht Nr. 1588/31, July 10, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 4.

⁷⁰ “Abstimmungskundgebung der NSDAP. Ortsgruppe Leck in Fligges Garten, Lyck,” July 16, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 4.

⁷¹ Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien*, 156.

events and heritage of 1921 that were impermissible at ceremonies of a broader political make-up.⁷² The *Untergau* Upper Silesia furthermore planned a big, region-wide Nazi gathering, writing to the region's *Oberpräsident* to request a one-day lifting of the speaking ban on "*Selbstschutz* fighter and *Gauleiter*" Brückner.⁷³ A Nazi commemoration of the battle had also been convened there the previous year and in both years Nazis observed the anniversary of the plebiscite too with celebrations on the mountain.⁷⁴ More plainly political rallies regularly also took place on St Anne Mountain. In June 1929, for instance, one Abel respondent, Erich Femke, who worked as a customs official in Annaberg, joined the NSDAP at a rally on that mountain,⁷⁵ and in July 1932 a borderland rally with Hermann Göring drew around 35,000 to the site.⁷⁶ Nazism's appropriation of the St Anne Mountain eventually culminated in the opening in May 1938 of the so-called Reich Memorial there. The 33-foot high mausoleum, with the Reich's largest amphitheater down the hill, was a monumental expression of Nazism's portrayal of itself as in the tradition of the *Freikorps* and *Selbstschutz*, whose fallen the structure honored.⁷⁷ Eventually in the Third Reich commemoration, from the St Anne Mountain ceremonies to the Knivsberg festival, came fully under Nazi auspices, but up until 1933 the party's independent events only established it as one stakeholder among many in a widely popular commemorative tradition.

Though the Nazi movement's involvement in commemoration was thus usually unobtrusive, it could at times be more bellicose, with the republican government the main target of hostile rhetoric. Post-war territorial losses were blamed on the "mistakes of the

⁷² *Ibid.*, 151.

⁷³ "Selbstschutzkämpfer und Gauleiter"; Brief an den Oberpräsidenten, May 14, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

⁷⁴ Janus, *Germans and Poles*, 296.

⁷⁵ Erich Femke, 13.

⁷⁶ "35 000 in Annaberg: Nat.-soz. Grenlandkundgebung," *Der Angriff*, July 11, 1932. BArch, R 1501/126182.

⁷⁷ Peter Polak-Springer, "Landscapes of Revanchism: Building and the Contestation of Space in an Industrial Polish-German Borderland, 1922-1945," *Central European History* 45, no. 3 (September 2012): 510.

‘liberal epoch’,⁷⁸ while the *Freikorps*, supposed precursors to Nazism, were credited, in a frontier version of the stab-in-the-back myth, with preserving the remaining borderlands for Germany in the face of republican obstruction.⁷⁹ Hitler himself declared in Masurian Allenstein that, “It was not the party comrades of Mr. Severing, it was our party comrades who spilled their blood for Silesia’s defense. However, the best parts of Upper Silesia were still lost, because the party comrades of Mr. Severing ruled while our party comrades bled to death on the battlefields.”⁸⁰ Having failed Germany once, Severing and his ilk were now, he alleged, once again selling Germany out, while falsely accusing their Nazi opponents of unwillingness to defend Germany’s borders in case of attack.⁸¹ Speakers who, unlike Hitler, did have personal experience of the Upper Silesian uprising brought this to bear in their denunciations of the government. In March 1932, for instance, *Gauleiter* Helmuth Brückner gave a speech in Gleiwitz, in which he reflected “in connection with *Selbstschutz* experiences of a personal nature from 1921” on the, by implication bad, “character of the *Reichsbanner*.”⁸² Josef Adamczyk similarly declared himself to be speaking not as a man of his party but as “a former *Selbstschutz* fighter and refugee” at a December 1930 rally protesting the anti-German electoral terror that had recently swept Polish Upper Silesia.⁸³ In his speech, Adamczyk contrasted the heroism of the *Selbstschutz* with the dark machinations of the Center Party, whose dignitary Ulitzka had, he alleged, been in charge of disarming the *Selbstschutz*. Therefore neither that party

⁷⁸ “Fehlern der ‘liberalen Epoche’”; Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien*, 158.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁸⁰ “Es waren nicht die Parteigenossen des Herrn Severing, es waren unsere Parteigenossen, die ihr Blut zur Verteidigung Schlesiens vergossen. Allerdings gingen die beste Teile Oberschlesiens trotzdem verloren, denn während unsere Parteigenossen auf den Schlachtfeldern verbluteten, regierten die Parteigenosse des Herrn Severing!”; “Adolf Hitler - der Führer in Ostpreußen!,” *Der Wahlkampf*, April 22, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 100d.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² “im Zusammenhang mit *Selbstschutz*-Erfahrungen persönlicher Art von 1921 auf die charakterliche Haltung des *Reichsbanners*”; Letter, March 5, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

⁸³ “ehemaliger *Selbstschutz*kämpfer und Flüchtling”; “Betrifft: Öffentliche Protestkundgebung gegen die polnischen Terrorakte, veranstaltet von der Ortsgruppe Ratibor der NSDAP,” December 10, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

nor the unpatriotic Social Democrats had any right now to speak out against Polish terror, for which they, by undermining Upper Silesia's defenses back in 1921, bore considerable culpability.⁸⁴ Only the Nazi party, Adamczyk implied and his audience's banners explicitly stated, could restore the lost territory's afflicted German minority to the protection of German sovereignty. Likewise, the defenders of the violence with which a Polish opera performance in Oppeln met from Nazi and like-minded protestors in 1929 repeatedly compared the incident to post-war history. Despite government censure of the disturbance, far-right newspaper man Lothar Knaak proclaimed, the rioters had been right that Upper Silesians ought to defend the national integrity of their *Heimat*, so that the *Selbstschutz* fighters would not have "given their life in vain on the St Anne Mountain."⁸⁵ A flyer released by Oppeln's NSDAP chapter likewise criticized the government's promise of swift punishments for the violence's perpetrators. The urgency of their aim, namely for Germans to become "master of the situation" again in Upper Silesia, it underlined by enjoining readers to remember "the uprising 1921 and the blood bath of the St Anne Mountain."⁸⁶ As mentioned, Matucz, addressing the plebiscite commemoration in Masurian Lyck, invoked the spirit of the post-war era to encourage his audience's fight against the Young Plan. "As united as the Germans once went into the plebiscite struggle, exactly thus we must go to the referendum. The predatory greed must vanish from the memory of the Polish beast. Now only a united will and unity can save Germany from ruin. Therefore, it is the duty of each German to bethink himself of the war years as well as the plebiscite era," he adjured.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "...sonst kommt es doch noch so weit, daß die Selbstschutzleute auf dem Annaberger ihr Leben umsonst gelassen haben"; Report, June 11, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

⁸⁶ "Herr der Situation," "an den Aufstand 1921 und an das Blutbad vom Annaberg"; "Deutsche, vergeßt es nie!," [August 1929]. APO, NPO, 267.

⁸⁷ "So geschlossen wie die Deutschen s.Zt. in den Abstimmungskampf zogen, so genau müssen sie zum Volksentscheid ziehen. Der polnischen Bestie muss die Raubgier aus dem Gedächtnis verschwinden. Jetzt kann nur ein geschlossener Wille und Einigkeit Deutschland vor dem Untergang retten. Darum ist es Pflicht eines jeden Deutschen, sich, sowohl auf die Kriegsjahre als auch auf die Abstimmungszeit zu besinnen."; "Abstimmungskundgebung der NSDAP. Ortsgruppe Leck in Fligges Garten, Lyck," July 16, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 4.

Fellow right-wing organizations shared this disparaging assessment of the government's current and past record, but themselves on occasion became objects of criticism or infiltration and takeover. Sometimes the Nazi movement's attempts to insinuate itself into more established groups were silent and strategic. In Silesia, for example, the recently established subdivision *Ostland*, probably the precursor to the division of the same name in Darré's ministry for agriculture, sent around a missive to members of the *Gauleitung*, district leaders, and speakers in June 1932 explaining that its task was to prepare the vulnerable borderland culturally and politically for Germany's projected weakest hour, that between the Weimar Republic's demise and the National Socialists' firm establishment in power, on which the country's Eastern neighbors would surely seek to capitalize. To that end, the subdivision would be formed of select well-connected individuals, who would be charged with observing and influencing, among others, nationalist associations, journals, youth groups, *Grenzlandschulen*, and their ethnic German networks. The letter concluded with a call to inform Count Yorck von Wartenburg, the *Gau*'s consultant for Eastern questions, of organizations and papers that warranted monitoring and, of course, of party members interested in participating in the subdivision's work.⁸⁸ These plans echo an order Ernst Röhm issued to the SA *Gaue* earlier that year, instructing the SA to be ready to secure the border during the transition period between republican and Nazi rule by monitoring border traffic and ensuring no opponents of the new regime entered or exited the country.⁸⁹ Going beyond Röhm's purely military plan of action, the subdivision *Ostland*, in view of the Nazi party's few dedicated border-political infrastructures, hoped to co-opt others' in order to secure the border at the Nazis' moment of domestic political triumph. In the end, however, Hitler's legal and smooth assumption of power assured that neither scheme, which were never fleshed out anyway, was needed.

⁸⁸ Sonderrundschreiben der Abtlg. "Ostland," June 1, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁸⁹ Befehl des Obersten SA-Führers, January 15, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

Other, more demonstrably successful Nazi bids to gain control of commemorative groups turned on the assertion that the party was not just a competitive but a superior steward of nationalist heritage. In 1931, the *Kameradschaft ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer, Ortsgruppe Gleiwitz* fell victim to such a coup. The relationship between the *Kameradschaft* and the NSDAP had always been tense, as a complaint the former lodged with the regional government in mid-1931 illustrates. In it, the *Kameradschaft* portrayed its foundation in mid-1929, when activity by Poland's paramilitaries threateningly increased, as the remedying of the *Selbstschutz* veterans' initial failure to organize themselves after the battles of 1921. When rising fears of a potential Polish invasion had subsequently led other associations, like the NSDAP and the *Stahlhelm*, to also found defensive battalions, the *Kameradschaft* had prevailed on them to form a federation of self-defense units. This consortium had, however, quickly succumbed to squabbles over leadership positions, in which the *Selbstschutz* veterans of the *Kameradschaft* had been brushed aside. Consequently, the *Kameradschaft* now aimed to set up its own battalion again and demanded government support, threatening that if the *Kameradschaft* was not endorsed as alone entitled to form self-defense formations, it would turn to the people of Gleiwitz directly.⁹⁰ Undaunted by the vague threat, the government in its report on the matter suggested that some *Kameradschaft* leaders be found responsible positions in the official *Grenzschutz* to forestall a sense of grievance, but also dismissed the claim that the *Kameradschaft* was Gleiwitz's first *Selbstschutz* veterans' group. The *Landeschützen* had brought veterans together since the early 1920s and the *Kameradschaft* had really been set up to provide its disgruntled founders with the leadership positions they had failed to win in the *Stahlhelm* and the NSDAP.⁹¹ No endorsement was thus forthcoming from a government that naturally saw the border's

⁹⁰ Eingabe der Kameradschaft ehemaliger oberschlesischer Selbstschutzkämpfer Gleiwitz, [February/March 1931]. APO, NPO, 1000.

⁹¹ "Betrifft: Eingabe der Kameradschaft ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer, Ortsgruppe Gleiwitz," March 3, 1931. APO, NPO, 1000.

defense as the province of the army, was scarcely interested in getting mixed up in the far right's internal frictions, and eventually even investigated claims that the leader of the *Kameradschaft*, Dlugosch, had once lost a job for embezzlement.⁹² The tension with the NSDAP documented by the complaint and by the government's response thereto came to a head the following month, when a certain Meyer, an active Nazi who had formerly been the chairman of the local DVFP and then until 1929 of Gleiwitz's NSDAP branch, called a meeting of *Selbstschutz* veterans under the pretense of planning the following month's commemoration on the St Anne Mountain. In reality, however, he had contrived the meeting to argue the case that most of the *Kameradschaft* membership was uneasy about its policy of party-political neutrality and about its acceptance of government funding. Since, Meyer claimed, they wanted an explicitly nationalist association instead, he asked Dlugosch to dissolve the *Kameradschaft*. When Dlugosch unsurprisingly refused and left with his dozen or so supporters, the majority of remaining members voted in support of Meyer's suggestion, founding the *Selbstschutz-Traditionsverein* "SS.OS." with him at its head.⁹³ At the magistrate's intervention, Meyer agreed to dissolve the SS.OS. and merge it back into the *Kameradschaft* if the majority of members agreed, but when he put the proposal to them, he prefaced it with a speech accusing the *Kameradschaft* of scheming against the SS.OS. with the authorities, of reserving the right to (re-)admit only members it deemed suitable, and of allying itself with the Jews.⁹⁴ Predictably, the proposition to re-join the *Kameradschaft* was voted down and the SS.OS. endured through the summer, when the documentary thread ends, a fact the decimated *Kameradschaft* tried to leverage in renewed attempts to curry favor with the regional government.⁹⁵

The *Kameradschaft*'s was a case of merely local profile, but the assault in the second half of 1932 on the prestigious *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* reverberated across

⁹² Letter, August 19, 1931. APO, NPO, 1000.

⁹³ "Gründung eines neuen Selbstschutztraditionsvereins ("SS.OS.") in Gleiwitz," April 30, 1931. APO, NPO, 1000.

⁹⁴ "Selbstschutz-Traditionsverein 'SS.OS.' in Gleiwitz," May 18, 1931. APO, NPO, 1000.

⁹⁵ Letter to the *Regierungspräsident*, August 13, 1931. APO, NPO, 1000.

that region. As Broder Schwensen's dissertation-turned-monograph about that organization's internal dynamic chronicles, an internal opposition led by lawyer and Nazi sympathizer Dr. Bernhard Schmidt and backed by Eckernförde's Nazi mayor Dr. Wilhelm Sievers had emerged already in late 1931. These now-critics were long-standing members of the *Bund* and in that sense exactly the brand of internal Nazi influencers Koshar studied.⁹⁶ Now, however, they highlighted the stagnation of the *Bund*, which was grappling with a dwindling number of branches and members, and blamed it on an ineffective leadership headed by the passé Wilhelm Iversen. Instead, they demanded a revival of the activist spirit of the *Bund* and of the demand for the border to run again along the Königsau, the pre-war border river.⁹⁷ While, as an oppositional newspaper commentary professed, "a *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* is as justified and necessary today, if not more so, than at the time of its foundation," it could only achieve the requisite vitality, it was implied, under Nazi auspices.⁹⁸ Despite Sievers' leading role in this opposition, the *Bund*'s leadership decided to go ahead with plans to host the 1932 annual convention in Eckernförde, affording him as mayor and leader of the local *Bund* chapter a key role in an event at which half the leadership posts, including the chairmanship, would be up for election.⁹⁹ Going well beyond the gradual and informal expansion of Nazi influence spotlighted by Koshar, the opposition moved into the open a day before the congress' start, publicly announcing its intention to make a bid for these positions in an article by Schmidt run by the far-right *Kieler Zeitung*¹⁰⁰ and by the Nazis' own *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Broder Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund 1919-1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993), 361, 363.

⁹⁷ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund 1919-1933*, 361.

⁹⁸ "Nun, berechtigt und nötig ist ein Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund heute noch genau ebenso sehr, wenn nicht noch mehr als zur Zeit seiner Gründung.," "Grenzpolitische Wochenschau," *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, August 31, 1932. LSH, Abt. 309 Nr. 35300.

⁹⁹ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 364-365.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹⁰¹ "Iversen bleibt - die NSDAP. zieht ihre Konsequenzen," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 6, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

The piece derided the *Bund* as a “puny club,” which under Iversen’s impotent leadership had failed to connect with the “nationalist flame” – that is, Nazism – that by putting “the nationalist idea” first had come to blaze in Schleswig-Holstein and increasingly within the *Bund* itself.¹⁰² It then concluded by expressing the hope that this disconnect would be resolved at the convention and that thereby the *Bund* would become an organization capable of “sending shivers down the spines of the Danes” once more.¹⁰³ Naturalist metaphors, akin to that of the flame, for Nazism’s might were subsequently repeatedly employed at the convention itself, with the movement most often likened to an unstoppable wave.¹⁰⁴ Wilhelm Sievers himself counseled the *Bund* to ask itself, “How can we approach the farmer? How can we catch the nationalist wave and get in with the nationalist forces.”¹⁰⁵ Concurring, a sympathetic delegate demanded Iversen’s resignation “because otherwise no connection with the farmers and the nationalist wave would be possible.”¹⁰⁶ Even an article published in the magazine of the *Bund* in the convention’s wake acknowledged that the organization stood to benefit from reinvigoration by the “nationalist wave,” though it rejected the implication that Nazism’s formal, partisan influence on the *Bund* should be facilitated.¹⁰⁷ It was not their partisanship, the opposition, however, argued, that hampered the *Bund*. Rather, it asserted, it was Iversen’s loyalties to the German People’s Party that alienated the base of

¹⁰² “kümmerlichen Verein,” “der nationalen Flamme,” “nationalen Gedanken”; “Bomben auf Eckernförde!,” [*Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung/Kieler Zeitung*], [September 3, 1932]. LSH, Abt. 399.105 Nr. 71.

¹⁰³ “Hoffen wir, daß der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund wieder eine Organisation wird, bei dessen bloßer Namensnennung den Dänen eine Gänsehaut den Rücken herunterrieselt, so ähnlich, wie vor 83 Jahren die Bomben auf Eckernförde den Dänen selbst nachher eine blasse Angst einjagten!”; Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner Bund*, 367-373.

¹⁰⁵ “Wie können wir an die Bauern herankommen? Wie können wir die nationale Welle auffangen und Anschluß finden an die nationalen Kräfte. [sic]”; “Landes-Versammlung des Schleswig-Holsteiner Bundes,” *Eckernförder Zeitung*, September 5, 1932. LSH, Abt. 399.105 Nr. 71.

¹⁰⁶ “da sonst keine Verbindung mit den Bauern und der nationalen Welle möglich sei”; Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ “nationale Welle”; “Grenzkampf verlangt Volksgemeinschaft,” *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner*, September 1932. LSH.

the *Bund*,¹⁰⁸ especially when all the while the organization was being prevented by him and his clique from coming to reflect the region's political make-up.¹⁰⁹ Iversen and his colleagues, these critics held, were "leaders without a people" elected by a "coincidental majority of delegates, which for the most part have no contact and resonance with the most vital parts of the people,"¹¹⁰ whereas Nazism with its mass support, evidenced by the party's performance in the July *Reichstag* election, possessed the "moral right to leadership."¹¹¹ Only recognizing Nazism's claim to authority and linking up with its large base would ensure that the *Bund* would once again be run "in the spirit of its founders," one article maintained, making explicit the claim that its mass character gave the Nazi movement a peculiar connection with the post-war era's ethos and therefore a particular right to its legacy's stewardship.¹¹² By contrast, the opposition predicted, as long as the *Bund* continued to shut out Schleswig-Holstein's "activist groups" – that is, the Nazi party and the sympathetic *Land- und Bauernbund* – it would remain condemned to "failure and fruitlessness."¹¹³

The critics certainly did their part to make this prophesy come true. Delegates to the annual convention, appreciative of the all-important if slow-moving work the *Bund*

¹⁰⁸ "Iversen schreibt seine neuen Erkenntnisse nieder: Grenzkampf. Eine Antithese," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, November 8, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91; "Iversen bleibt - die NSDAP. zieht ihre Konsequenzen.," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 6, 1932. SHLB; "Die Nationalsozialisten kehren dem Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund den Rücken," *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*, September 6, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

¹⁰⁹ "Iversen schreibt seine neuen Erkenntnisse nieder: Grenzkampf. Eine Antithese," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, November 8, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91; "Gedanken zur Tagung der Landesversammlung des Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bundes," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, August 25, 1932. SHLB.

¹¹⁰ "Die Mehrheit im Lande, nicht die zufällige Vertretermehrheit, die zum allergrößten Teil keinerlei Fühlung und Resonanz in den lebenswichtigsten Teilen des Volkes hat, hätte den Ausschlag geben müssen.," "Grenzpolitische Wochenschau," *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, September 9, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

¹¹¹ "das moralische Recht auf die Führung"; "Das Echo von Eckernförde. - 'Ein schwarzer Sonntag' - Und was sagt Nordschleswig?," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 8, 1932. SHLB.

¹¹² "im Sinne seiner Gründer"; "Landesversammlung des Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bundes: Wir müssen unseren eigenen Weg gehen," September 8, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

¹¹³ "aktivistische Gruppen," "Erfolglosigkeit [sic] und Unfruchtbarkeit"; "Iversen bleibt - die NSDAP. zieht ihre Konsequenzen," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 6, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

had long done and still loyal to the principle of party-political neutrality that the *Bund* had followed since its inception, voted down Sievers' candidacy for the chairmanship with sixteen votes to Iversen's sixty-seven.¹¹⁴ Following this result, *Gauleiter* Lohse declared his party comrades' memberships in the *Bund* void the day after the convention¹¹⁵ and within the month the party set up its own border-political bureau, though it is not clear that it ever did anything.¹¹⁶ More than the establishment of the bureau, though, it was the flowering in the months after the congress of the seeds of doubt about the leadership sown there that proved the undoing of the *Bund* and that prevented Iversen and his team from regaining the "initiative."¹¹⁷ Instead, they struggled to contend with repeated setbacks: Dr. Schmidt's branch would not expel the troublemaker and when his membership was removed at an advisory board meeting, it was in the face of thirteen abstentions.¹¹⁸ Leaders of branches of the *Bund* outside Schleswig-Holstein, heretofore the most loyal, were beginning to falter in their steadfast support, given the criticism to which Iversen's headship exposed the organization. In Berlin, the regional *Bund* leader reported, Nazi members were agitating at the level of the branches against the central leadership. Accommodating Sievers, he suggested, might curb this dynamic.¹¹⁹ Iversen's suitability was drawn into question further when his leadership of the *Bauernverein* and, most importantly, his renewed German People's Party candidacy in the November *Reichstag* election lent credence to the opposition's charge that it was he who was a "party man,"¹²⁰ though he quickly withdrew from both in favor of serving the border political cause that had always been his highest priority.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 372.

¹¹⁵ "Anordnung!," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 6, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91; Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 373.

¹¹⁶ "Grenzlandbüro der NSDAP. in Flensburg," *Kieler Zeitung*, September 29, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

¹¹⁷ "Initiative"; Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 377.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 376-377.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 378.

¹²⁰ "Parteimann"; "Iversen schreibt seine neuen Erkenntnisse nieder: Grenzkampf. Eine Antithese," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, November 8, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

¹²¹ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 378-380.

Despite Iversen's rowing back, the *Land- und Bauernbund*, which was largely Nazified, and the *Verein Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger* broke away from the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* too. In their announcement of their formation of an alternative border-political cooperation, they criticized the *Bund* for its disconnect from the people.¹²² All the while, the narrative of the *Bund* about the convention failed to gain traction with a membership and wider population that had become variously too "fanaticized" or "disoriented" to be receptive.¹²³ That dynamic could not have been helped by the constant stream of critiques of the *Bund* run not only by the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* but also by likeminded local papers like the *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, provocative press coverage that has been repeatedly cited here but hardly features in Schwensen's account.¹²⁴ Recognizing the extent to which confidence in his leadership had been undermined, Iversen finally resigned on December 15, 1932¹²⁵ and on February 12, 1933, less than two weeks after Hitler's rise to power, Sievers took control of the *Bund*, efforts to fence him in with old-guard board members having come to naught.¹²⁶

The case of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* was as remarkable as it was untypical. The Nazi movement's eventually successful campaign to take over the venerable association was indicative primarily of the electoral strength it had developed by then, which emboldened it to aggressively stake out leadership claims even in an arena, in which it had been wont to cooperate and to emulate established traditions. Nazism's permeation of commemorative organizations had been correspondingly gradual and informal, though no less effective for that. The movement's only claim to distinctness in commemorative regards was the mass base on which it could draw to more effectively

¹²² Ibid., 381.

¹²³ "desorientierte Mitgliedschaft," "fanatisiert"; Ibid., 377.

¹²⁴ See, for example, the *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*'s coverage of criticisms of the *Bund* in its "Grenzpolitische Wochenschau" throughout the late summer and fall.

¹²⁵ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 384; reactions thereto: "Iversen geht," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, December 20, 1932. LSH, Abt. 309 Nr. 35300; "Der Rücktritt des Vorsitzenden des Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bundes," *Nordschleswigsche Tageszeitung*, December 21, 1932. LSH, Abt. 309 Nr. 35300.

¹²⁶ Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, 386-396.

take charge of the post-war struggle's legacy and of the pursuit of irredentist goals that this heritage was generally taken to imply. In this and other ways, set out by the following chapter, Nazism tried to portray itself as uniquely capable of addressing the borderlands' concerns.

Propaganda for Contested Regions

The iconic struggles of the post-war years and the episodes, large and small, recalled about the borderlands in egodocuments make plain that these regions had a distinct historical experience. This heritage and the regions' continued exposed situation were marshalled all too often, as Rudolf Rietzler has shown for the case of Schleswig-Holstein, by the right to generate a politically charged *Sonderbewusstsein*. The Nazi movement too fostered and engaged this mentality. Dedicated borderland pages, which were regular features of some regions' party newspapers, and frequent so-called *Grenzlandkundgebungen* portrayed these provinces as German through and through – historically as well as currently – and as exceedingly loyal in their Germandom, despite their much-belabored beleaguerment. The Nazi movement itself was celebrated as the culmination of this steadfast Germandom, powerful enough to defend the imperiled regions. Thus, propaganda proffered Nazism as a solution to anxieties and animosities that it simultaneously kept awake. In contrast to this posturing, however, some ostensible *Grenzlandkundgebungen* hardly addressed border issues at all and organizationally the movement was often neglectful of remote border regions. As so often, then, Nazism spoke to the concerns of a specific segment of society, without there being much substance behind the rhetoric. How Nazism tried to rhetorically position itself in the borderlands is, however, no less pertinent for that.

In Schleswig-Holstein, the foundation for the Nazi party's strong showings lay, Rudolf Rietzler argued, in an "elaborately cultivated, elitist *Sonderbewußtsein*" as a borderland.¹ Starting with the nationalist plebiscite campaign committee, right-wing organizations linked rejection of Versailles with repudiation of the republican government.² Subsequently, the so-called Schleswig-Holsteiner movement, a regional

¹ "aufwendig kultiviertes, elitäres Sonderbewußtsein"; Rudolf Rietzler, *"Kampf in der Nordmark": Das Aufkommen des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1982), 120.

² *Ibid.*, 112-116.

variant of the reactionary *Heimat* movements flourishing at the time, took hold, spearheaded by the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* but propagated also, for example, at the university in Kiel.³ Many of its historians agitated for the retaining of North Schleswig during the plebiscite campaign and for its reintegration into Germany throughout the 1920s on the basis of a skewed, *völkisch* portrayal of the region's history.⁴ Supposedly misunderstood and insufficiently supported by the rest of the country, Schleswig-Holstein was said by exponents of Schleswig's *Heimat* movement to have a nationalist mission, against Denmark on the one hand but domestically on the other.⁵ Particularly racially pure and equipped with the strong sense of *Volksgemeinschaft* that its frontier location and plebiscite experience had engendered, it was to revitalize Germany and lead it to renewed might.⁶ These attitudes should not be understood as simply the *zeitgeist*, which implies they were a "detached natural phenomenon," but rather, Rietzler emphasizes, as the product of conscious manipulation by the "anti-Weimar right wing."⁷ It was because the Nazi party dovetailed in rhetoric and goals with this politicized *Heimat* movement while additionally boasting tighter organization and a superior propaganda machinery, he then asserted, that it prospered there, displacing older associations.⁸ This argument was echoed four years later by Peter Heinacher in his study of the NSDAP's rise in Flensburg, though he considered Rietzler's work valuable but overly "monocausal."⁹ Rietzler, who explicitly acknowledged that no "gapless and direct causality" existed between Nazism's compatibility with the politicized *Heimat* movement and its ascendancy, was arguably only aiming to draw attention to a previously unrecognized factor in the party's success

³ Ibid., 121.

⁴ Christoph Cornelißen, "Das Kieler Historische Seminar in den NS-Jahren," in *Wissenschaft an der Grenze: Die Universität Kiel im Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Christoph Cornelißen and Carsten Mish (Essen: Klartext, 2010), 236.

⁵ Rietzler, "*Kampf in der Nordmark*", 120; Ibid., 294.

⁶ Ibid., 291-293.

⁷ "von handfesten Interessen, gesellschaftlichen Konstellationen und Funktionszusammenhängen losgelöstes Naturereignis," "des antiweimarischen Rechtslagers"; Ibid., 323.

⁸ Ibid., 337.

⁹ Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg*, 12.

story.¹⁰ What is more problematic about his work is that he did not actually show how precisely Nazism engaged with the borderland consciousness he had described, instead following up his meticulous chronicling of that mentality's formation with a very organization-centric account of the NSDAP's re-establishment in 1925 and ensuing growth. Only of the *Schleswig-Holsteinische-Tageszeitung*, founded in 1928, does he mention that it was designed to bring "the '*Heimat* consciousness' of its readers into an identificatory connection with National Socialism."¹¹ Finally, Rietzler concludes his narrative in 1928, covering only the time before Nazism's electoral breakthroughs. Focusing on the subsequent years, the engagement of Nazi propaganda with borderland mentalities, only posited by Rietzler, will be probed here.

The assumed fundamental Germandom of the borderlands and the animosities governing them, both so central to these regions' political culture, were portrayed by the Nazis as rooted in a liberally falsified version of history, which served to justify their chauvinist expansionism. Several Abel respondents, as has already been shown, described their families' settlement of the Eastern border regions as the peopling and cultivation of "empty Eastern space," even when their families had only come as part of the settlement schemes of the previous few decades.¹² In the same vein, articles in Nazi newspapers derived a German claim to regions, which they held had never been truly Polish, from the benefits German settlers had brought them. In 1932, for instance, the *Pommersche Warte* ran an article maintaining that before the Migration of the Peoples Germanic tribes had inhabited the surroundings of the Vistula river. When they moved West, they were replaced by Slavs, who advanced all the way to the Elbe. There, in the time of Charlemagne, the Slavs encountered the Germans, who had since then been pushing them back east. This process had occurred in waves as Germany's strength

¹⁰ Rietzler, "*Kampf in der Nordmark*," 323.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 432.

¹² "in den leeren Ostraum"; Schoepke, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58386/span-classqueryhlschoepkespan?ctx=e95033d1-115d-4de2-9201-ef07ad5977ef&idx=0>.

waxed and waned over the centuries: when in the Middle Ages, the Holy Roman Empire had been a major power, German settlers had been invited by Eastern European rulers and the Teutonic Order had built castles that testified still to its bygone might. A time of weakness followed, but then East Prussia, West Prussia, and Posen became German and under Frederick the Great German power peaked, while Poland conversely experienced absolute decay. When Germany crumbled under Napoleon's onslaught, a Polish state was briefly resurrected, but it lasted only until Prussia's recovery. The German Empire had been strong, but after 1918 the republican government had willingly abandoned the lost territories.¹³ Also turning to the Migration of the Peoples, a spurious, Germanized version of Upper Silesia's history printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1930 hoped to remedy Germany's supposed lack of emotional and financial investment, in comparison to Poland, in its part of the region through increased awareness of its German past. The Silingians, a Germanic tribe, had settled there first and given the region its name, but for unspecified reasons they had voluntarily evacuated the area. Tentatively, the Slavs had taken their place, but they were never able to populate the land as densely as the Silingians had and, concentrated in settlements near rivers and ponds, they lived primitively from fishing and hunting. Incompetent attempts at agriculture did not yield anything more than the occasional bowl of "millet gruel," the *Beobachter* scoffed.¹⁴ The Piasts, Upper Silesia's medieval sovereigns who according to the *Beobachter* had strong familial ties to Germandom, eventually invited German settlers, so that they might help them transform their desolate realm into a flourishing one. Indeed, the German settlers soon established thriving towns and villages, introduced German jurisprudence, and founded monasteries. Through their superior culture they benevolently and non-violently assimilated the inferior Slavs. The survival of Polish names, the *Beobachter* insisted, was owed only to German tolerance. If they had suppressed Slavic names, as Poland was now

¹³ "Der Kampf um Ostland," *Pommersche Warte*, February 5, 1932. KP.

¹⁴ "Hirsebrei"; "Sterbendes Land," *Völkischer Beobachter*, April 23, 1930. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 794.

removing every German signboard, there would soon have remained no indication of erstwhile Slavic settlement. Over the ensuing centuries, Upper Silesia's Germans proved their perseverance, maintaining their settlements in the region even through the fighting they had to do and the deprivation and destruction they had to endure during the wars in which the region was involved, particularly during the 16th- and 17th-century religious conflicts. This hardy love of Heimat endured even now that the region had been torn asunder for a decade.¹⁵

A series of extracurricular lectures at the university in Königsberg, which promoted similar, factitious histories of Germanism in various contested parts of Eastern Europe, was written up by the East Prussian party organ *Preußische Zeitung* in 1931. The first lecture asserted that Eastern Europe had seen three Germanic settlement waves. During the first, in prehistoric days, Germanic tribes had peopled Eastern Europe from the Baltic to Odessa. However, they had eventually migrated in search of better land and Slavs had filled the void, though their settlement was sparser. Later, in the Middle Ages, Eastern European rulers had invited a second wave of German settlers, who had introduced accomplishments like German law into the territories where they took up residence. With the exception of the Teutonic Order's conquest and military rule, this colonization and the ensuing Germanization of Slavs had been peaceful, the lecture, like the *Beobachter*, maintained. Since the 17th and 18th centuries a third wave of dynastically driven colonization had set in. The lecturer, referring to the benefits Eastern Europe had supposedly reaped from German settlement, concluded, "Civilized behavior and culture give the highest right in history."¹⁶ This declaration, the *Preußische Zeitung* rejoiced, proved that scientific research arrived at the same opinions about Eastern Europe as Nazism did. While the first lecture had thus been boastful, the second, on the history of the Baltic Germans, struck a gloomier, if still chauvinist, note. Though the Baltic

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Das höchste Recht in der Geschichte gibt Gesittung und Kultur."; "Der Weg des deutschen Volkes in den Osten," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 14, 1931. MOB.

Germans had historically belonged to the urban bourgeois and the landed classes and even now occupied prominent positions in politics and society, they had taken disproportionate economic hits in the postwar period, particularly through expropriation and redistribution of land. That measure had been justified with invocations of centuries of mistreatment by landowners, an accusation that, the lecturer held, was untrue. German landowners had, he claimed, implemented social reforms of their own accord and made peasants' leases heritable in the nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth, most land had ostensibly been farmed by such hereditary leaseholders. Though their social rank had secured Baltic Germans influence at the highest levels, the speaker bemoaned that the lack of German common folk, particularly of farmers, had frustrated Germanization. German teachers and clerics had contributed to this failure by acting "ideologically short-sightedly."¹⁷ They had, on the one hand, allowed anyone regardless of ethnic background access to German schools, thus displaying a misplaced faith that anyone could be Germanized, and, on the other hand, protected the Baltic languages, neglecting even the task of cultural Germanization. To this day, Baltic Germans' lack of assertiveness meant that there was no German irredenta in the Baltics. However, Baltic Germans did maintain a flourishing German school system despite their situation's worsening in the war's wake, which showed some German spirit. Generally, the struggle in the Baltics, the lecturer declared, was one between German spirit and – by implication Slavic – matter. "We wish the Germans in the Baltic region at least a victory of the spirit over matter," the *Preußische Zeitung* concluded, but, "This victory will however probably only come when the Baltic Germans seek and cement intimate contact with the Hitler spirit."¹⁸ The last documented lecture made the case that the benefits wrought by German settlers in Eastern Europe were reflected in the architecture of Toruń and

¹⁷ "ideologisch kurzichtig"; "Baltendeutschum in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 22, 1931. MOB.

¹⁸ "Wir erhoffen für die Deutschen im Baltenlande immerhin einen Sieg des Geistes über die Materie. So der Vortragende. Dieser Sieg wird aber doch wohl nur kommen, wenn die Baltendeutschen mit dem Hitlergeist innige Fühlung suchen und festigen."; Ibid.

Kraków, two of Poland's grandest cities. That of the former was allegedly that of native Germans, that of the latter of German colonizers. In conclusion, Germany's "national forces" were called on to win through steadfastness a "new victory for Germandom" in these "areas soaked with German culture and German blood."¹⁹

It was not only the German East but Schleswig too that was held to be German by its deepest nature, with the rival ethnicity and culture merely overlaid on it. A 1932 article about "The population of the *Nordmark*" in the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* recounted the nationality struggle there. Despite Danish accusations to this effect, it averred, there had been no "Germanization since the Reformation" in the region, for its population had always been German, as demonstrated by its support of North Schleswig's Duke of Holstein against the Danish crown as far back as 1420.²⁰ Nevertheless, once the Holy Roman Empire crumbled at Napoleon's hands, calls for the complete integration of Schleswig into Denmark arose in that country. The king only complied with such demands cautiously and many educated Danes, one of whom is quoted as having acknowledged German as Schleswig's primary language and condemned its potential separation from Holstein, supposedly advised against them. Even so, those who wished to see Schleswig's incorporation into Denmark continued to gain influence, such that through the intervention of France, England, and Russia the province was granted to that kingdom in the wake of 1848, even though during that year's upheavals the population had made clear "that it in its overwhelming majority was willing to be German."²¹ During the ensuing period of Danish rule, there were some few in Flensburg who supported it, but others who preferred a return to personal union under the Danish king and many more yet who identified as Germans. In the rest of Schleswig,

¹⁹ "Wir wollen unsere Mahnungen an die nationalen Kräfte unseres Volkes richten, auf daß ihre Charakterfestigkeit in diesen, durch ein tragisches Schicksal entrissenen, mit deutscher Kultur und deutschem Blute getränkten Gebieten, einen neuen Sieg des Deutschtums erfechten möge!"

"Die deutsche Stadt in Polen," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 29, 1931. MOB.

²⁰ "Germanisierung seit der Reformation"; "Die Bevölkerung der Nordmark," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 13, 1932. KSI.

²¹ "daß sie in erdrückender Mehrheit gewillt war, deutsch zu sein"; Ibid.

the majority for Germany was even more pronounced. Not only south of Flensburg did everyone consider themselves German, but in the district of Åbenrå too only Germans were elected, while the northernmost and later notoriously Danish district Haderslev was allegedly much more German at the start of Denmark's reign than it was when it returned to Germany a decade and a half later. This change was deemed the product of aggressive Danization, efforts at which continued with the toleration of the much too lenient Empire even after Schleswig's reintegration into Germany. Now again part of Schleswig "had been surrendered" to Denmark, while Danish activism tried to penetrate not just the district of Flensburg but even the more southerly county of Schleswig.²² In the first few elections after the war, Schleswig's voters had still been blind to this and given the "Jewish democrats" many votes, but now "National Socialism has awakened the *Nordmark*."²³ History was instrumentalized in this as in the other articles to present Nazism as the entity liable to rectify the discrepancy between contemporary and ostensible historical reality.

Borderlanders were considered by the Nazis not only intrinsically but even exceptionally profoundly German. This conception of borderlands and their residents was a long-established nationalist trope, which presumed that constant confrontation with other nationalities brought out the national character of individuals.²⁴ The Nazi movement's engagement with the competing nationalist narratives about Masuria is especially illustrative of this conception of borderlands populations. Polish nationalists emphasized that native Masurians had in the Middle Ages come to East Prussia from the Polish region of Masovia and that they retained a Polish dialect as their vernacular. Eventually, they hoped, the Masurians would therefore awaken to their Polish national identity. To that end, minority schools were established in Masuria by a Polish school

²² "ausgeliefert worden"; Ibid.

²³ "die jüdischen Demokraten," "Aber der Nationalsozialismus hat die Nordmark geweckt."; Ibid.

²⁴ Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the language frontiers of imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 20-22.

association, a van driver for which was attacked in late 1931 by the residents of Jedwabno in response to plans to open a school in nearby Groß Dembowitz.²⁵ When the public prosecutor some weeks afterward visited to investigate the incident, rioting ensued, for which over a hundred villagers – a third of them Nazis – were tried in January 1932.²⁶ Polish newspapers considered the attackers not truly German. The *Gazeta Olsztynska*, for instance, argued that the 1910 census’ record of native language proved Jedwabno’s Polish nature. The deed could thus only be that of string pullers who availed themselves of “the hand of our duped compatriots.”²⁷ In another article, the same newspaper deemed the defendants’ swagger in the courtroom credible perhaps from real Germans but not from Masurians. They seemed, it wrote, to want to give themselves the “appearance of better Germans than the Germans themselves,” not realizing that they would always be regarded by Germans with derision.²⁸ The *Mazur* likewise thought the defendants only the “willing tools” of German instigators, who stirred up resentment against everything Polish in their newspapers.²⁹ Despite the acquittal in which the trial resulted, the *Mazur* hoped that by highlighting Masurians’ manipulation by Germans and thereby contributing to the “awakening of Masurians’ national spirit” it would be a victory after all.³⁰

Later in 1932, the *Kurjer Warszawski* with similar optimism conjectured that Masuria like Upper Silesia would eventually develop a Polish nationalist movement and

²⁵ "Deutsche Gerechtigkeit," *Kurjer Poznanski*, March 1, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

²⁶ "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

²⁷ "der Hand unserer betörten Landsleute"; "Neue unerhörte Ausschreitungen der Deutschen in Jedwabno," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, January 13, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 20, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

²⁸ "Diese wollen sich den Anschein besserer Deutschen [sic] geben als die Deutschen selbst..."; "Bemerkungen zum Prozeß in Neidenburg," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, January 28, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, February 3, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

²⁹ "willige Werkzeuge"; article, *Mazur*, March 2, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

³⁰ "Erweckung des nationalen Geistes der Masuren"; *Ibid.*

deemed its embrace of Nazism a positive step in that direction. Outwardly, the *Kurjer* explained, Masurians may have acted “arch-German,” but their retention of their Polish mother tongue revealed their true Polish-ness.³¹ Since Masurians, however, more yet than other Poles in the German East, were incapable of “independence”³² and were prepared only to “blindly and obediently follow people whom they regard as legitimate leaders,” a Polish nationalist movement had nevertheless not yet taken hold.³³ Nazism was, at least, an oppositional movement. Elsewhere in Eastern Germany, notably in Upper Silesia, Polish nationalism had grown out of such movements and the *Kurjer* hoped for a similar result in Masuria.

Nazi propaganda, by contrast, claimed profound Germandom for border populations like Jedwabno’s. In “With tears in the eyes: *Deutschlandlied*,” the *Preußische Zeitung* described the interrogation of the defendants as “a picture of the Masurian loyalty to the German *Heimat*, a living tableau of these borderland Germans’ will to assertion.”³⁴ These simple, loyal people, it went on, had not intended to riot. What had occurred had rather been “the spontaneous outbreak of the people’s will,” the expression of “the desperation of the Masurian soul, which felt betrayed in the fight for the *Heimat*” by the prosecutor’s appearance.³⁵ Another piece, under the heading “‘We were, are, and remain German, we Masurians!’ – Speeches for the defense in the Jedwabno trial,” reported that one of the defense attorneys had invoked the “burning

³¹ “kerndeutsch”; “Die Masuren,” official summary of the article “Das Problem der masurischen Seele” in the *Kurjer Warszawski*, *Tagesbericht über die polnische Presse*, August 18, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 172.

³² “Selbständigkeit [sic]”; Ibid.

³³ “Er könne nur blind und gehorsam Leuten folgen, die er als berechnete Führer betrachte.”; Ibid.

³⁴ “Die Vernehmung der Angeklagten, die immer noch andauert und noch die dritten Tag in Anspruch nehmen wird, ist ein Abbild der Masurentreue zur deutschen Heimat, ein sprechendes Gemälde des Behauptungswillens dieser Grenzlanddeutschen...”; “Mit Tränen in den Augen: Deutschlandlied,” *Preußische Zeitung*, January 20, 1932. MOB.

³⁵ “der spontane Ausbruch des Volkswillens,” “die Verzweiflung der masurischen Seele, die sich verraten fühlte im Kampf um die Heimat”; Ibid.

border’,” whose threat the defendants felt acutely.³⁶ “Let us not make desolate,” he urged, “this village at the border, the men of Jedwabno have other things to do than to sit idly in prison.”³⁷ The defendants’ role as defenders of Masuria’s Germandom was reiterated once more toward the end of the day, when the rioters’ ringleader shouted the rallying cry quoted in the article’s title. In other regions too, loyal, authentic Germandom was attributed to borderlands residents. Thus Heinz Gefaeller, an Abel respondent from outside Tilsit, who already as a young boy had experienced the loss of the neighboring Memel territory as formative, in adulthood gave up his civil service job to instead take work as a coachman in a hamlet immediately on the border, where he felt at home, “because I recognized the people at the Greater Lithuanian border as real Germans.”³⁸

Such praise of borderland residents’ steadfast Germandom was frequently linked to the role as their champion that Nazism claimed for itself. In 1929, for example, the *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* in an article celebrating the movement’s recent penetration into eastern Masuria emphasized that the “economic and national misery,” which Masurians had reaped following their resounding commitment to Germany in 1920, had facilitated their acceptance of Nazism.³⁹ A piece in a different, unidentified newspaper similarly extolled the rise of the Nazi party in Masuria in the face of the neglect the region had suffered, despite having made “a profession of loyalty such as no borderland tribe has so far made” during Germany’s “most difficult time” and in defiance of Polish promises and

³⁶ “‘brennenden Grenze’”; “Wir waren, sind und bleiben deutsch, wir Masuren!” - Die Verteidigungsreden im Jedwabno-Prozeß,” *Preußische Zeitung*, February 3, 1932. MOB.

³⁷ “Veröden wir nicht, so schloß er, dies Dorf an der Grenze, die Männer von Jedwabno haben etwas anderes zu tun, als tatenlos im Gefängnis zu sitzen.”; Ibid.

³⁸ “Ich fühlte mich dort wohl, weil ich die Menschen an der großlitauischen Grenze als echte Deutsche erkannte.”; Heinz Gefaeller, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58393/span-classqueryhlheinzspan-span-classqueryhlgef?ctx=0abf8302-6d19-404b-a745-eea8b022525a&idx=0>.

³⁹ “wirtschaftliche und volkliche Not”; “Ost-Masuren: Es geht vorwärts!,” *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, December 1, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 17.

chicanery.⁴⁰ Even a booklet of election propaganda, *Kampf und Vormarsch*, in its account of a speaker's tour of Masuria paid tribute to the region's "own tribe of arch-German men" with a "particularly pronounced *Heimat* feeling."⁴¹ This impassioned patriotism that came with being a border population would, a 1935 history of Widminnen's NSDAP chapter hoped, allow Masurians to play a particular part in the Third Reich.⁴² In its turn, the movement would safeguard Masurians' chosen Germandom from Polish encroachments. Electoral violence was motivated and excused by this aim, as a later chapter will discuss. More rhetorically, the *Preußische Zeitung* urged Masurians to wake up and protect their decision for Germany by rallying more closely yet around the Nazi standard over the rather trivial incident of a fraternity at the University of Poznan publishing a call to donate books for Polish libraries in Masuria. The appeal, the paper averred, was one of many signs of Poles' disregard for "your German profession of loyalty at the plebiscite."⁴³ This affinity between border populations, accustomed to nationality struggles, and Nazism, with its struggle for Germany, was alluded to elsewhere as well. In June 1932, for instance, a Nazi activist from Berlin recounted in the *Pommersche Zeitung* how he had first privately travelled to Eastern Pomerania some years ago and had found to his surprise that the fearful resentment inspired by the border, only three kilometers distant, had not engendered political engagement. Since then, he had regularly mailed party newspapers to friends in Eastern Pomerania and was pleased to note that whenever he returned more people had embraced the movement. Nazism's

⁴⁰ "schwerster Zeit," "[e]in Treuegelöbnis, wie es bisher kein Grenzstamm abgelegt hat"; "In Masuren beginnt die Verfolgung!. Ein Ausschnitt aus dem Kampf um Ostpreussen - Schwere Bluttat," copy of article, [1932]. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C ,64a.

⁴¹ "Masuren hat seinen eigenen Stamm urdeutscher Männer. Ein besonders ausgeprägtes Heimatgefühl spricht aus ihren Worten."; "Tagebuchblätter aus dem Wahlkampf," *Kampf und Vormarsch*, [1930]. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 100b.

⁴² "als Grenzlandbevölkerung"; "Die Geschichte der Bewegung der NSDAP- Ortsgruppe Widminnen - Kr. Lötzen - Gau Ostpreußen aufgestellt vom Ortsgruppenleiter Ernst Daher," 1935. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 61b.

⁴³ "Ostpreußen, Masuren wacht auf, gebt acht: so wird heute nach 10 Jahren Euer deutsches Treuebekenntnis bei den Abstimmungen von den Polen geachtet."; "Die Idee des polnischen Ostpreußens' - Polnische Kulturarbeit in Masuren," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 12, 1931. MOB.

militantly nationalist message had resonated with a population that felt threatened in its Germandom and sending the journals had contributed to Eastern Pomerania having been the constituency with the second most votes for Hitler in the first round of the presidential election in March, after Schleswig-Holstein.⁴⁴ In the run-up to that election, the *Gau* Pomerania had, in fact, issued a brochure emphasizing Hitler's credentials as not only a worker, frontline soldier, and politician but also as a borderland German. Readers were urged to cast their vote for Adolf Hitler, "the borderland German, who in his youth experienced Germandom's torn-ness."⁴⁵ In Germany's most Nazified region, Schleswig-Holstein, general Litzmann in an address in Flensburg remarked that "You up here will know best, after all, what it means to fight for the *Heimat*."⁴⁶ This knowledge he clearly deemed pertinent to participation in the political struggle that Nazism, in its turn, waged for Germany.

This special relationship between Nazism and borderland inhabitants was acclaimed even though local campaigners at times acknowledged that their movement's leadership in actuality took no great interest in border regions. They charged, for instance, that it was not only the reviled government that treated Masuria as "Mother Germania's poorest stepchild," but that the Nazi leadership too, at least early on, did not take much interest in the party's development in the region.⁴⁷ "Only three quarters of a year ago," a newspaper recounted in 1929, "National Socialism held its planned entry into Masuria. But no 'big speakers' came to us from the *Reich*, no '*Reichstag*

⁴⁴ "Die Zeitung auf Vorposten," *Pommersche Zeitung*, June 15, 1932. KP.

⁴⁵ "...dem Grenzlanddeutschen, der in seiner Jugend die Zerrissenheit des Deutschtums erfahren hat, der sein Bekenntnis zum Großdeutschland im Felde, in der Festung [can't see whether any other words there due to binding] einem Leben des Kampfes niederlegte."; "Wer wird Reichspräsident? Hindenburg oder Hitler?," [1932]. APS, NPS, 39.

⁴⁶ "Sie hier oben werden doch am besten wissen, was es heißt, um die Heimat zu kämpfen."; "Es sprach in Flensburg im Deutschen Haus: Prinz August Wilhelm von Preußen," *Flensburger Nachrichten*, July 21, 1932. SHLB.

⁴⁷ "Mutter Germania ärmstes Stiefkind"; "In Masuren beginnt die Verfolgung!. Ein Ausschnitt aus dem Kampf um Ostpreussen - Schwere Bluttat," copy of article, [1932]. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 64a.

delegates’.”⁴⁸ Instead, “*Gauleiter* Koch and *Gau* executive director Heidrich showed the way, then they said: ‘Help yourselves!’”⁴⁹ It was despite the leadership’s neglect that “our swastika banner rises higher and higher” in Masuria.⁵⁰ The Masurian NSDAP files in the Prussian Privy State archive do indeed convey the impression that local party leaders’ requests to send speakers were usually rebuffed by the leadership in Königsberg, because the Masurian branches were unable to muster the speaking fees. The unsupported nature of their hard work for the movement in a “miserable area” was invoked by Heinz Anrissus, an Artaman on an estate near Lyck and a local organizer, at the beginning of a letter to Heidrich, which suggested a visit by the leadership figure and took an affirmative answer for granted.⁵¹ The guilt-tripping was taken further by Allenstein’s district leader Heinrich Berg. Writing to Hitler himself because it was rumored he would be making a trip to East Prussia, Berg asked that the 200 party members in Western Masuria, who lived in “the furthest corner of the strongly suffering province, strongly besieged by the Poles,” not be forgotten.⁵² “When I can write that, immediately by the border, German workers, perhaps without having even a weekly pipeful of tobacco, are absolutely determined to lead the fight for the third *Reich* to victory,” he pronounced, “your appearance will surely not be denied us.”⁵³ In the end, though, Hitler first visited Masuria in 1932. In Schleswig-Holstein too, the *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, which openly sympathized with the NSDAP, conceded in 1932 that unfortunately neither the government in Berlin nor the party leadership in Munich had so far taken sufficient interest in the North Schleswig question. That what interest had arisen in the matter in

⁴⁸ “Erst vor einem Dreiviertel Jahr hielt der Nationalsozialismus seinen planmässigen Einzug in Masuren. Doch zu uns kamen keine ‘grossen Redner’ aus dem Reich, keine ‘Reichstagsabgeordneten’.”; *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ “*Gauleiter* Koch und *Gaugeschäftsführer* Heidrich wiesen den Weg, dann hiess es: ‘Helft Euch selber!’”; *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ “Und in Masuren steigt unser Hakenkreuzbanner höher und höher.”; *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Letter to Georg Heidrich, August 6, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 62c.

⁵² “Wir wohnen an der äussersten Ecke der schwer leidenden und von Polen hartbedrängten Provinz.”; Letter to Adolf Hitler, February 9, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 34b.

⁵³ “Wenn ich schreiben darf, daß hart an der Grenze, deutsche Arbeiter, ohne vielleicht auch nur wöchentlich eine Pfeife Tabak zu haben, fest entschlossen sind den Kampf um dritte Reich bis zum Siege zu führen wird uns Ihr Erscheinen nicht versagt sein.”; *Ibid.*

Munich at least during the struggle for the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* would not subside again would, however, be ensured, it claimed, by Schleswig-Holstein's vigorous Nazi movement.⁵⁴

Despite the disinterest of the party's higher rungs, the link between the threat to the borderlands and Nazism was continually affirmed in party-run newspapers in particular, especially in their dedicated borderland pages. In Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, the page “*Kampf in der Nordmark*” was a regular feature of the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*. The page chronicled how the domestic political struggle between the left and the Nazi movement was playing out in Schleswig-Holstein specifically, but also commented on the relationship with Danes and Denmark. One such page, for example, imputed anti-fascist intrigues to Communists in Altona, summarized ordinary local SA propaganda marches, and also enjoined Germans not to buy Danish products in a piece titled “Boycott as defense.”⁵⁵ Another article under the “*Kampf in der Nordmark*” rubric reported on a large border-themed rally. It further tried to refute the accusation, often brought up in the borderlands, that Nazism was abandoning Southern Tyrol to its fascist Italian ally by pointing to the party program’s proclamation that, “‘All who are of German blood, whether they today live under Danish, Polish, Czech, Italian or French sovereignty, shall be united in a German *Reich*,’” presumably an elaboration of the first of the manifesto’s twenty-five points.⁵⁶ The “*Brennende Grenze*” feature of the East Prussian *Preußische Zeitung*, which appeared frequently but irregularly, was dedicated to nationality politics in East Prussia and in Eastern Europe more widely. One representative page from January 7, 1931 featured long articles about the plight of the Sudeten Germans, a nostalgic thought piece about looking across the border into the

⁵⁴ “Grenzpolitische Wochenschau,” [*Schleswigsche Zeitung*], [September 1932]. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

⁵⁵ “Boycott als Abwehr. Kauft keine dänischen Waren!,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, January 25, 1930. SHLB.

⁵⁶ “‘Alle, die deutschen Blutes sind, ob sie heute unter dänischer, polnischer, tschechischer, italienischer oder französischer Oberhoheit leben, sollen in einem Deutschen Reich vereinigt sein.’”; “Aus der Taktik der Volksnationalen Reichsvereinigung.” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, May 9, 1930. SHLB.

Memel area, and a warning about the threat posed by the Polish Western Marches Association. Later that month, the first in the university of Königsberg's lecture series about Germandom in the East was summarized in a "*Brennende Grenze*" page, as, in due course, were the following installments.⁵⁷ The condemnation of the Polish fraternity's book collection for Masuria appeared in this rubric too.⁵⁸ The mistreatment of Germans and the curtailment of their rights in Eastern European countries regularly furnished material for articles. One piece, for example, publicized the demands of the *Heimatbund Ostpreußen* to the League of Nations regarding Poland's treatment of its German minorities.⁵⁹ Others censured the erosion of Alsace's traditional autonomy under French rule,⁶⁰ the elimination of minority rights in Czechoslovak towns like Brno, where the number of Germans at the last census had not met the threshold,⁶¹ Polish policies designed to decrease German landownership,⁶² and the Latvian parliament's supposed plans to expropriate Riga's German cathedral and hand it over to the defense ministry as a garrison church.⁶³ Internal conflicts both in Germany and among Eastern Europeans were also addressed. Many articles concluded as a matter of course with condemnations of the German government's pussyfooting and some centered entirely on such denunciations, such as a report about an ethnic German association's refusal to contribute to the planned erection of a Stresemann memorial on the Rhine. Notably, the association would have been willing instead to support a memorial to Schlageter, who had supposedly rendered outstanding services to Germany's liberation.⁶⁴ Polish atrocities in

⁵⁷ "Der Weg des deutschen Volkes in den Osten," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 14, 1931. MOB;

"Baltendeutschtum in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 22, 1931. MOB.

⁵⁸ "Die Idee des polnischen Ostpreußens' - Polnische Kulturarbeit in Masuren," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 12, 1931. MOB.

⁵⁹ "Um deutschen Lebensraum im Osten - Die Forderungen des Heimatbundes Ostpreußen," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 5, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁰ "Absolutistisches Mittelalter. Frankreichs Elsaß-Politik," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 6, 1931. MOB.

⁶¹ "Die Volkszählung in der Tschechoslowakei," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 5, 1931. MOB.

⁶² "Agrarrecht und Minderheitenrecht in Polen," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 6, 1931. MOB.

⁶³ "Rigaer Deutsche Domkirche in Gefahr!," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 27, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁴ "Eine deutliche Antwort: Deutsche Männer im verlorenen deutschen Land an den Stresemann-Ausschuß," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 13, 1931. MOB.

Ukraine⁶⁵ and the deplorable situation of ethnic Ukrainians in Poland, meanwhile, were thematized in order to justify anti-Polish sentiments.⁶⁶ The newspapers' borderland pages were regular reminders of what Germany's contracted borders meant for its border areas as well as for ethnic Germans and of the need therefore to support Nazism.

Borderlands consciousness, with a Nazi bent, was also disseminated through politicized cultural events. In 1931, for example, a Nazi theatre troupe toured Germany's border regions with the play *Es brennt an der Grenze*, which told the supposedly true story of a farm that caught fire on the Polish side of the border and could not be saved because the German firemen who tried to come to its aid were prevented from crossing into Poland.⁶⁷ That the provincial government in the Border Province, a co-owner of Schneidemühl's state theatre, gave permission for such an obviously incendiary play to be staged was maligned by the *Głos Pogranicza*.⁶⁸ Concurring that the play was clearly not just a cultural but an inflammatory political event, in Masuria the *Landräte* and police chiefs were instructed by the Prussian minister of the interior and Allenstein's *Regierungspräsident* to surveil the performances.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur*, established and run by Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, set up dedicated borderland chapters, if very late. In June 1932, the *Schlesische Zeitung* reported, it had held its first great rally in Eastern Germany in the three years since its foundation, namely in Beuthen. The provincial head of the *Kampfbund* in his address opined that while the German Empire had not been responsible for the war's outbreak, it did bear "völkisch guilt."⁷⁰ Now, one had to find one's way back to "German nature,"

⁶⁵ "So hausten die Polen in der Ukraine," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 6, 1932. MOB; "So hausten die Polen in der Ukraine," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 5, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁶ "Zur Lage der Ukrainer in Polen," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 12, 1931. MOB; "Die ukrainische Frage und die polnische Nationaldemokratie," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 12, 1931. MOB.

⁶⁷ "Eine neue deutsche Herausforderung," *Szlandar Polski*, January 19, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 30, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁶⁸ "Es brennt an der Grenze," *Głos Pogranicza*, January 12, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 30, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁶⁹ Letter to the *Landräte* and police chiefs, December 29, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 27.

⁷⁰ "völkische Schuld"; "Kampf für deutsche Kultur," *Schlesische Zeitung*, June 28, 1932. APO, NPO, 991.

which, he argued, should be straightforward in the borderlands, where “national consciousness” was well-developed.⁷¹ His speech was followed by operatic and dramatic performances. In Schleswig-Holstein, the *Kampfbund* a year later established an “office for borderland Germandom,” which was intended to strengthen borderland residents’ knowledge of the “treasures of *nordmärkisch* folklore,” such as sagas and folk dance.⁷² This idea that exposure to folk culture would strengthen Germandom and the political opinions that were assumed to go hand in hand with it found its most common expression, however, in the tacking on of *Deutsche Abende* to border rallies. The newspaper advertisement of a large SA borderland rally in Flensburg in July 1932, for example, listed not one but two parallel *Deutsche Abende* as the final event rounding out a day, the program for which also included a field service, military exercises, a propaganda march through town, a wreath laying ceremony at the war memorial, and a speech by Prince August Wilhelm.⁷³ In June of that year, the NSDAP chapter of Schwerin an der Warthe in the Border Province likewise publicized a borderland rally, whose program, after a parade and addresses by some of the party’s nationally renowned speakers, was to conclude with a dance and a performance by a Nazi theatre troupe.⁷⁴

Dedicated to stoking irredentist flames, the so-called *Grenzlandkundgebungen* of which *Deutsche Abende* were often part constituted an important tool in Nazism’s propagandistic repertoire in the border regions, which could sometimes attract large audiences and new members. Upper Silesia’s legendary St Anne Mountain was a popular site for these as well as for commemorative events. In March 1930, for example, the local NSDAP chapter announced an upcoming “big *Grenzlandkundgebung*” with members from nearby chapters and “guests from Czechoslovakia,” which would honor the lost

⁷¹ “deutsche Wesen,” “Volksbewußtsein”; Ibid.

⁷² “Amt für Grenzlanddeutschtum,” “Schätze des nordmärkischen Volkstums”; “Grenzen verpflichten! Ein Aufruf der Kampfbünde für Deutsche Kultur,” *Flensburger Nachrichten*, August 1, 1933. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 421.

⁷³ “S.A.-Grenzlandtreffen,” *Flensburger Nachrichten*, July 14, 1932. SHLB.

⁷⁴ Advertisement, *Schweriner Kreiszeitung*, June 18, 1932. APP, NPP, 168.

territories.⁷⁵ It was also at the St Anne Mountain that a *Grenzlandkundgebung* with Hermann Göring in 1932 attracted an audience of 35,000.⁷⁶ A borderland rally in Flensburg in 1932 with Hitler himself drew over 40,000 people by the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*'s estimate.⁷⁷ After the successful rally many sympathizers joined up.⁷⁸ Also in 1932, Prince August Wilhelm spoke to an "S.A.-Grenzlandtreffen" in Flensburg, which attracted an audience of around 2,000. He told of his personal connection to the lost territory to the north. "When I speak here in my maternal *Heimat*," he said, "you can't hold it against me that I send my gaze with anger into the other country, where my mother's palaces stand under foreign rule."⁷⁹ This circumstance, he declared, made him feel "tightly connected" with his audience and inspired in him the wish "to get out anyone from my maternal *Heimat* who still has the courage to advocate for his people."⁸⁰ Likening the fight for Nazism to the borderland struggle, it was then that he concluded, "You up here will know best what it means to fight for the *Heimat*."⁸¹ Joseph Goebbels too had been meant to appear at a *Grenzlandkundgebung* in Flensburg, but could not make it, so that Danzig's *Gauleiter* Albert Forster had to substitute for him at the 1931 rally that drew a 4,000-strong crowd.⁸² Goebbels did, however, speak in Tilsit in the summer of that year, where he declared that, "We are the part of the German

⁷⁵ "eine große Grenzlandkundgebung," "Gäste aus der Tschechoslowakei"; "Betrifft: Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Annaberg der NSDAP. am 12.3.1930 im Lokal bei Hartmann," March 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

⁷⁶ "35 000 in Annaberg: Nat.-soz. Grenlandkundgebung," *Der Angriff*, July 11, 1932. BAArch, R 1501/126182.

⁷⁷ "Adolf Hitler in Flensburg," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 25, 1932. SHLB.

⁷⁸ Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg*, 363.

⁷⁹ "Wenn ich hier in meiner mütterlichen Heimat spreche, so können Sie es mir nicht verdenken, daß ich meinen Blick mit Zorn in das andere Land schicke, wo die Schlösser meiner Mutter unter fremder Herrschaft stehen."; "Es sprach in Flensburg im Deutschen Haus: Prinz August Wilhelm von Preußen," *Flensburger Nachrichten*, July 21, 1932. SHLB.

⁸⁰ "So werden Sie es auch verstehen, daß ich mich mit Ihnen eng verbunden fühle und aus meiner mütterlichen Heimat jeden herausholen möchte, der noch den Mut besitzt, sich für sein Volk einzusetzen."; *Ibid.*

⁸¹ "Sie hier oben werden doch am besten wissen, was es heißt, um die Heimat zu kämpfen."; *Ibid.*

⁸² "Nationalsozialistischer Grenzlandkampf. Pg. Forster (Danzig) in Flensburg." *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, November 1, 1931. SHLB.

Reich, which will one day give its nation the place in the world which it deserves. Our territory has to be expanded. One day we have to blow up the barriers which block our way to the East."⁸³ Catering to his audience, he went on, "Here at the border we don't have to prove that a nation cannot be deprived of the necessary space[...]. We demand it, so that we can provide bread for our children."⁸⁴

Evidently, many borderland rallies were characterized by resentment and vengefulness about Germany's post-war borders. In the Border Province, for example, a set of rallies titled "'We are breaking the chains – German be the East'" was planned for December 6, 1930 in eleven towns and villages.⁸⁵ Already beforehand, the government fretted about the irredentist message and bellicose tone to be expected. Since calls to "'self-help'" and threats of "'retribution measures'" might "adversely influence the *Reich* government's steps against the terrorizing of the Germans in the ceded territories" when relations with Poland were already tense, police were to supervise the rallies armed with permission to disband them.⁸⁶ In the event, the one documented meeting, in Flatow, went smoothly.⁸⁷ Two years later Flatow was the scene of a SA rally that courted controversy considerably more. Under the motto "Front line against the East!" the event was meant to display Germanism's strength and the SA's determination, in a district that was home to renowned Polish activist pastor Domanski.⁸⁸ The thousand-strong rally was thus, the *Głos*

⁸³ "'Jesteśmy tą częścią Rzeszy Niemieckiej, która kiedyś zapewni swemu narodowi miejsce, jakie mu się w świecie należy. Nasze terytorium musi być powiększone. Musimy kiedyś wysadzić w powietrze te bariery, które zagrażają nam drogę na wschód.'"; Karol Fiedor, "Traktat wersalski w propagandzie i publicystyce niemieckiej okresu międzywojennego," *Olsztynskie Studia Niemcoznawcze* (1989): 96-97.

⁸⁴ "'Tutaj nad granicą nie protzebujemy udowadniać, że naród nie może być pozbawiony koniecznej mu przestrzeni [...]. My jej żądamy, aby móc zapewnić w ten sposób chleb naszym dzieciom.'"; *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸⁵ "'Wir brechen die Ketten - Deutsch sei der Osten'"; Letter to the *Landrat* in Flatow, November 27, 1930. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 275.

⁸⁶ "Es bedarf keines Hinweises, dass von deutscher Seite alles vermieden werden muss, was die Schritte der Reichsregierung gegen die Terrorisierung der Deutschen in den abgetretenen Gebieten ungünstig beeinflussen könnte. Insbesondere kann nicht geduldet werden, dass die Redner zur 'Selbsthilfe' auffordern oder der polnischen Minderheit in Deutschland 'Vergeltungsmassnahmen' androhen."; *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Report, December 9, 1930. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 275.

⁸⁸ "'Front gegen Osten!"; "Zur Kundgebung der Nationalsozialisten in Flatow," *Flatower Zeitung*, September 6, 1932. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 280.

Pogranicza remarked, part of a pattern of harassment of Domanski by the Nazis, which included routine journalistic attacks as well as rare but notable violent excesses.⁸⁹ At this Flatow rally, *Reichstag* deputy Siegfried Kasche threatened, “When Adolf Hitler orders the SA. to march, the SA. marches and when he orders that the SA. stands at the ready in their surcoats, then it simply stands at the ready. And when the *Führer* orders that we run the Poles out of the country, then that is what will happen.”⁹⁰ He went on to vow that the future reckoning with Poland would take place not at the current border but in Bromberg and Posen.⁹¹ The *Glos Pogranicza* justly decried Kasche’s rhetoric as “reprehensible warmongering and irresponsible politics by people who don’t know what they are doing.”⁹²

Like the set of events under the motto “We are breaking the chains – German be the East’,” *Grenzlandkundgebungen* sometimes formed part of a wider targeted effort to Nazify the border regions. The plan for the large rally on St Anne Mountain with Czechoslovak guests, for one, came just when the local NSDAP chapter organized to expand the SA in localities immediately on the border, as was being promoted by the SA’s *Gau* leadership.⁹³ In Schleswig, the first half of 1930 saw a months-long recruitment drive by the NSDAP and the SA in the districts adjoining the border. Already in December 1929 Flensburg’s police president reported that a sizable “*Grenztreffen*” with the SA’s “Führer ‘Ober-Nord’” was planned for the spring of 1930 in order to strengthen National Socialism in the border region. Speeches by Hitler in four of the

⁸⁹ “Wohin marschiert die SA?,” *Glos Pogranicza*, September 9, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 17, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁹⁰ “Wenn Adolf Hitler es befiehlt, dann marschiert die SA. und befiehlt er, daß die SA. im Waffenkleide bereit steht, dann steht sie eben bereit! Und wenn der Führer befiehlt, daß wir die Polen zum Lande hinauslaufen, dann geschieht das eben!”, “Zur Kundgebung der Nationalsozialisten in Flatow,” *Flatower Zeitung*, September 6, 1932. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 280.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² “eine sträfliche Kriegstreiberei und eine unverantwortliche Poliitk von Leuten, die nicht wissen, was sie tun”; “Wohin marschiert die SA?,” *Glos Pogranicza*, September 9, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 17, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁹³ “Betrifft: Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Annaberg der NSDAP. am 12.3.1930 im Lokal bei Hartmann,” March 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

province's cities, including Flensburg, were envisaged for soon after this rally.⁹⁴ By the time this forthcoming recruitment campaign was announced to the ordinary members of Flensburg's NSDAP and SA in January 1930, the regional leadership also had in view meetings with Strasser, Goebbels, and Münchmeyer as speakers. At the end of May or in early June, it was proclaimed, Schleswig-Holstein's SA would hold a grand rally as a capstone to the recruitment drive; the *Gau* leadership was working to secure Hitler's attendance.⁹⁵ More immediately, a February government report relayed, eighteen smaller rallies were planned for the districts Flensburg and Südtondern for "the near future."⁹⁶ In the end, the campaign's finale was marked by an SA rally in April. 2,000 SA men congregated in the town of Schleswig and drove from there to Flensburg and Eckernförde with stops along the way, showing local residents the strength of the organization.⁹⁷

In contrast to these high-profile occasions, *Grenzlandkundgebungen* could also be routine, local affairs. In Masurian Lyck, for instance, the local SA branch was ordered in June 1931 to attend a *Grenzlandkundgebung* in Oletzko that was due to take place a few days later.⁹⁸ The meeting in question does not appear to have been of any particular import but was instead a standard of the local meeting circuit. An event of the same type, a "*Grenzaufmarsch*," was held a few months later in Schleswig's Südtondern county.⁹⁹ It seems to have been a borderland rally of such proportions that attracted Richard Buntrock, the author of a 1942 history of the NSDAP chapter in Masurian Gablick, to Nazism. He recounted how he had been cycling to Oletzko in 1926 when a motorcade sped past him. The men in the cars and on the motorcycles were "joyous" and exuded "certainty of victory," Buntrock recalled, and he was informed that they were "Hitler's

⁹⁴ "Betrifft: N.S.D.A.P.," December 18, 1929. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4557.

⁹⁵ "Betrifft: N.S.D.A.P. und S.A.-Treffen in Flensburg," January 14, 1930. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4557.

⁹⁶ "nächste Zeit"; "Betr.: N.S.D.A.P.," February 10, 1930. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4557.

⁹⁷ "Kampf um die Nordmark." *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, May 9, 1930. SHLB.

⁹⁸ "Betr. SA. der NSDAP.," June 19, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

⁹⁹ "Grenzaufmarsch des Sturmbann II," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 4, 1931. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4563.

propagandists” on a borderland drive.¹⁰⁰ It was Buntrock’s first encounter with a movement he would go on to serve loyally.

However, not all *Grenzlandkundgebungen* actually engaged with border issues. Many gatherings, including ones with prominent speakers, had the borderland designation applied to them without their content reflecting this. In Flatow, for example, it was announced that an SA march “to show the Poles that there are still Germans” was scheduled for March 22, 1931, but it turns out that it was really only a run-of-the-mill convention for the SA’s Border Province-North district.¹⁰¹ The 35,000-strong rally with Göring on the Annaberg, meanwhile may have been billed as a borderland one, but the admittedly short newspaper report about the event did not mention him bringing up the border at all.¹⁰² Likewise, when *Gauleiter* Forster of Danzig spoke in Flensburg in Joseph Goebbels’s stead, he, judging by the report in the *Kieler Zeitung*, spoke only about Germany’s domestic political struggle.¹⁰³ When Hitler spoke in Tilsit in 1932 the report about the event in the *Preußische Zeitung* was titled “Powerful *Grenzlandkundgebung* in Tilsit,” but the subsequent summary of the event and of Hitler’s address made no further mention of the border.¹⁰⁴ In far eastern Pomeranian Lauenburg too, Hitler in a 1932 speech there “spent a whole 5 minutes of his ca. hour-long address” on “the most important borderland problems,” in the derisive words of a local republican newspaper.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ “Ich bin im Frühjahr 1926 auf einer Geschäftsreise. Es ist Sonntag, radle ich auf der Kunststrasse6Widminnen [sic] nach Treuburg. Im Wesolower Wälder rasen Motorräder und Autos mir entgegen. Freudige Männer, Siegesgewissheit spricht aus ihren Augen, braune Uniform ‘Hitlers Propagandisten’, auf der Grenzlandfahrt, lass ich mir später erzählen.”; “Die Ortsgruppe Gr, [sic] Gablick. (Ihr entstehen und werden, ihr Kampf und Sorgen.)” March 15, 1942. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 59d.

¹⁰¹ “den Polen zu zeigen, daß es noch Deutsche gibt”; Letter to the *Landrat* in Flatow, March 7, 1931. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 275.

¹⁰² “35 000 in Annaberg: Nat.-soz. Grenlandkundgebung,” *Der Angriff*, July 11, 1932. BArch, R 1501/126182.

¹⁰³ “Nationalsozialisten an der Nordgrenze in Flensburg: Nationalsozialistische Grenzland-Kundgebung im ‘Deutschen Haus’,” *Kieler Zeitung*, January 10, 1931. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4563.

¹⁰⁴ “Das stille Städtchen an der Memellandgrenze...”; “Mächtige Grenzlandkundgebung in Tilsit,” *Preußische Zeitung*, October 18, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰⁵ “Auf die wichtigsten Grenzlandprobleme verwandte Hitler ganze 5 Minuten seiner ca. einstündigen Ansprache.”; “Hitlers Rede - ein Versager!,” *Grenz-Bote*, April 6, 1932. APS, NPS, 39.

Despite these frequent failures by Hitler and others to actually speak to borderland issues, rallies were labeled *Grenzlandkundgebungen*, it stands to reason, in order to remind both attendees and newspaper readers of the presumed special relationship between Nazism and the borderlands, even though that connection all too often lacked concreteness and depth.

Where propaganda did concern itself with the border, it depicted the adjacent regions as sites, historically and currently, of authentic and steadfast, if beleaguered, Germandom. Dedicated newspaper rubrics, cultural events, and ubiquitous *Grenzlandkundgebungen* all portrayed Nazism as the champion of regions that felt threatened in their deeply held Germandom. In fact, this Germandom was assumed to in and of itself give rise to an affinity for Nazism, supposedly the most German of parties. However, not only did the Nazi movement not always live up to its much-extolled role, but, as the next chapter will explore, it also had to try to make sense of ethnic realities on the ground, which were hardly consistent with the image of borderlands' intrinsic Germandom.

Beyond the Racial State?

Historical consensus long held that the centrality of race was one of Nazism's defining features, setting it apart from other right-wing, nationalist movements in Germany and from other fascisms across Europe. In the Nazi view, historians believed, race was a stable, clearly defined category and the force structuring both individual fate and human history. Consequently, racial ideology, it was agreed, had structured the Nazi state and its policymaking about social, economic, and nationality issues and eventually about the war. Lately, however, some historians have questioned the primacy of race in Nazi *Weltanschauung* and decision-making, particularly when Nazi administrators were confronted with East-Central Europe's continued widespread national indifference. In the borderlands considered here, such difficulties in reconciling a clear-cut racist worldview with muddled ethnic circumstances and the traditional nationalist priority of expanding membership in the nation arose already during the NSDAP's pre-1933 phase of ascent. The upshot was that borderland Nazis during that period opportunistically employed different conceptions of the relationship between race and nationality in response to different situations and subjects. Opponents were thus denigrated in sharply ethno-nationalist terms that drew upon posited racial binaries, while Nazism simultaneously availed itself of more flexible, civic notions of Germanness where it recognized the need to advance its irredentist agenda through populations' nationalization. What their opponents decried as hypocrisy was also and more fundamentally an indication that Nazism, however much it emphasized the novelty of its racial approach, like previous nationalisms at the frontier required the simultaneous holding in the mind of both categorical racial thinking and less ascriptive approaches to nationality, a kind, if you will, of nationalist doublethink.

The most explicit challenge to date to the consensus, set out by Burleigh and Wippermann in their 1991 *The Racial State*, that racial goals underlay virtually all Nazi policy, appeared in 2017, when Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard Wetzell

published the edited volume *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*. Whereas *The Racial State* argued that “the Nazis had pursued a coherent racial policy,”¹ which excluded various undesirable groups and supported desirable ones in order to achieve a racial utopia, *Beyond the Racial State* has asked, “Have we perhaps lost sight of the fragmentary, instrumental, and performative character of Nazi racial discourse?”² Contributions to the volume spotlight how Nazi racial thought and policymaking were not monolithic and consistent, nor racial goals always prioritized. Roseman’s own demonstrates that early 20th-century racial science was not as unified as modern observers are prone to supposing and that instead racial thinkers often acknowledged a cultural as well as a biological dimension to race.³ In a like vein, Roseman shows, Nazis, committed as they were to biological racism, continued to also cast the German people as well as its putative enemies as cultural-political communities.⁴ Race is overall, he contended, not necessary to explain Nazism’s genocidal crimes and was “‘a secondary attribute to nation’,” particularly where race “‘marked the boundaries of the national community.’”⁵

Gerhard Wolf, who authored a chapter concerning the *Deutsche Volksliste* in Poland, shares this assessment. The two first initiatives in the fall of 1939, by the interior ministry of the Reich and by the stricter *Gauleiter* Greiser of Wartheland, to categorize the population of the newly annexed Western Polish territories both, he stresses, made “*Volkszugehörigkeit*,” proven by individuals’ profession thereof and by traits like German language use and interwar German activism, the determinant of citizenship

¹ Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard Wetzell, “Introduction,” in *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, eds. Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard Wetzell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

³ Mark Roseman, “Racial Discourse, Nazi Violence, and the Limits of the Racial State Model,” in *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, eds. Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard Wetzell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38-39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-47.

⁵ Pendas, Roseman, and Wetzell, “Introduction,” 9.

status.⁶ Himmler did push for a *Volksliste* like the one that Greiser had already established in the Wartheland to be introduced across the annexed territories. Acceptance to category C, which granted members state rather than full Reich citizenship, would, unlike in the Wartheland, be made dependent on racial suitability.⁷ While the interior minister signed Himmler's proposed *Volksliste* into law, both he and the *Gauleiter* opposed an overly exclusive application of the decree's racial language.⁸ Even Greiser, who was not unsympathetic to Himmler's concerns, resisted retroactive expulsions from category C of a *Volksliste* that he had after all already implemented, fearing unrest. Himmler had to promise that expulsions from the *Volksliste* would occur only if the individuals concerned could be immediately deported.⁹ In Danzig-West Prussia, the *Gauleiter* barred the RuSHA from participation in the mandated racial screening process, retaining his inclusive approach to residency and citizenship rights.¹⁰ In Upper Silesia, the *Gauleiter* would only permit group D to be screened by the RuSHA and even those results were widely ignored.¹¹ Himmler's defeat in this matter was not, Wolf argues, a victory of pragmatism over ideology. Instead, it was a triumph of *völkisch* over racial ideology, both of them deeply engrained in Nazism and providing administrators with ways to view and frame their interests.¹²

That Nazism did not differ fundamentally from earlier frontier nationalisms in its handling of these regions' incomplete nationalization was also observed by Tara Zahra. Her monograph about nationalization policies over the course of the 20th century's first half in Bohemia that targeted children contains the most extensive exploration of Nazi policies' adapting to national indifference. It describes how, since the question of what

⁶ Gerhard Wolf, "Volk Trumps Race: The *Deutsche Volksliste* in Annexed Poland," in *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 439.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 445-446.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 444.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 444-445.

¹² *Ibid.*, 448.

was ultimately to be done with Czechoslovakia's inhabitants was left for after the anticipated final victory in the absence of anywhere as yet to deport them to,¹³ efforts were made to Germanize them in the meantime.¹⁴ Such recruitment to the German nation was pursued freely, for the Czechs, by virtue of having been worthy opponents to the Germans in the nationalist struggle of the preceding decades, were deemed racially valuable and in any case proved impossible to distinguish from Germans by racial criteria.¹⁵ The Sudetenland's deputy *Gauleiter* admitted that, "A German national is one who himself professes to the German nation, as long as this conviction is confirmed by certain facts, such as language, education, culture, etc. Persons of alien blood, particularly Jews, are never Germans....Because professing to be a member of the German nation is of vital significance, even someone who is partly or completely of another race – Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, or Polish, for example – can be considered a German....Any more precise elaboration of the term 'German national' is not possible given current relationships."¹⁶ This blurriness of national boundaries and Czechs' perceived racial worth meant that most anyone professing to be German and willing to endorse Nazism could gain German citizenship, an average of 81 percent of applications for which was granted by the local magistrates.¹⁷ Such admission to German citizenship often occurred notwithstanding a lack of evidence for the applicant's Germandom or even proof against it, so that the loyalties of his or her children could be secured. German schools, for example, remained open to the children of such opportunistic converts to Germandom, even though this policy meant that the legal limit of twenty-five percent Czech-speakers was routinely exceeded.¹⁸ More forcible Germanization methods were

¹³ Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 172-173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 186-194.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

unsuccessful and rare in the Protectorate.¹⁹ In Bohemia, in Zahra's telling, the Nazi occupation thus did not employ fundamentally different methods for dealing with the region's nationally often indifferent, ethnically ambiguous reality than nationalist movements that had gone before.

Long before the wartime occupation with which Wolf and Zahra are concerned and before even their takeover of power, Nazis were already having to grapple with the tensions between national indifference and Nazism's essentialist race theory in Prussia's own borderlands. That ideology was, naturally, promulgated even there. *Reichstag* delegate Wilhelm Wigand, for instance, declared in a speech in Flatow in 1931, in repudiation of the government's assimilationist policies, that trying to transform a Pole into a German was as futile as attempting to turn a black man into a white-skinned one.²⁰ In an address in Schneidemühl the following year, Wigand, by then described as the local deputy *Gauleiter*, again held up the nationality struggle as one of "race against race" and as, in fact, an alternative to the mentality of "class against class" otherwise so destructively prevalent.²¹

This attitude met with much, though not uniform, condemnation from members of Germany's minorities. *Cech*, the magazine of the *Masurenbund*, which advocated Masurian autonomy within Germany, was an especial critic. In the November/December 1931 issue, for instance, it reported on an interpellation in the Prussian Diet, in which the NSDAP had demanded the *Masurenbund* and its leader Dr. Kurt Obitz be tried for treason. For the racism underlying this request the *Cech* had only scorn. The "background of the Masurian movement," after which the Nazi delegates had inquired in their interpellation, the article's author explained, was precisely the discrimination he and his

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 197-198.

²⁰ Report, September 21, 1931. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 275.

²¹ "Die Gegner sagen, Klasse gegen Klasse, wir werden aber sagen, Rasse gegen Rasse..."; "Ein Tag der deutschen Ostmark in Schneidemühl," July 1932. APP, Oddział w Pile, Zbiory czasopismo 12/4.

ilk had suffered due to their ethnicity and despite their support for Germany.²² Neither he nor, in fact, anyone in his village had voted for Poland in the 1920 plebiscite and he had served in the military for years. Even within that institution, internal immigrants to Masuria had derided locals like him as “dirty and stupid Pollacks” and when he left the army, he had been denied the customary civil service post.²³ Treatment like this impelled Masurians to organize to defend their rights. This thus far astute piece finally concluded with preposterous examples of Nazi racism’s ramifications, like a supposed insistence on permission to keep sterilized Polish-speakers as prostitutes. In the next issue, the *Cech* observed that the racist exclusion of Masurians from the German national community by the Nazis mirrored their barring therefrom of Jews. “The Hitler party and its abettors see inferior people in the Jews and in the Masurians because of their descent,” it wrote.²⁴ Kurt Obitz himself, in his *Dzieje ludu mazurskiego*, likewise warned, “It is so, we will go too, together with the Jews. Their opponents are also our enemies.”²⁵ He admonished also that if only space, not people, could be Germanized in Nazis’ view, then they must be planning to take non-Germans’ land and to remove them from all official posts.

Interestingly, however, not all borderland Poles shared these misgivings about the racial order proposed by the Nazis, as Brendan Karch has documented. Most of the time, Nazism was denounced, he acknowledged, as terroristic, but on some occasions its advent was greeted with relief. Nazis’ insistence on the separation of the races was, the *Nowiny Codzienne*, for example, once wrote, “in the interest of the purity of both cultures’.” That Germans “will no longer tolerate the preponderance of these cultural hybrids’,” who “count themselves part of the German people but were never really imbued with its high culture” and remained “Germanized Slavs’,” was to be welcomed.

²² “die Hintergründe der masurischen Bewegung”; “Der Landtag beschäftigt sich mit der Masurenfrage,” *Cech*, November/December 1931. SBB.

²³ “dreckigen und dummen Pollacken”; Ibid.

²⁴ “Die Hitlerpartei und ihre Helfershelfer sehen in den Juden und den Masuren wegen ihrer Abstammung minderwertige Menschen.”; “Alle sieben Jahre paßt ein Flick!,” *Cech*, January/February 1932. SBB.

²⁵ “Tak jest, idziemy także razem z Żydami, Ich przeciwnicy są także naszymi wrogami.”; Kurt Obitz, *Dzieje ludu mazurskiego*, ed. Grzegorz Jasiński (Dąbrówno: Moja Biblioteka Mazurska, 2007), 17.

When Hitler, in his new capacity of chancellor, in May 1933 proclaimed in the *Reichstag* that, “‘The notion of Germanization, this spiritual mentality of the past century, that one can make Germans out of Frenchmen and Poles, is for us equally foreign, such that we are turning ourselves passionately against the reverse efforts [to de-Germanize Germans]’,” the *Nowiny* applauded.²⁶ Both sides had an interest in drawing the national lines definitively and bringing the vying over the national grey zone to an end.

In the event, however, borderlands Nazis only invoked essentialist rhetoric when doing so could help justify political animosities and altercations. The former approach of opportunist racial essentialism is particularly strikingly illustrated by the discourse that surrounded the 1932 Potempa murder. The murder had taken place in the early hours of August 10, perpetrated by a small band of SA men, who late in the evening of August 9 had been driven from the SA hostel in Upper Silesian Broslawitz, where they were living, to Potempa, a village only about three kilometers distant from the Polish border.²⁷ There, local tavern owner and SA leader Paul Lachmann treated them to alcohol and cigarettes and then, with his friend Golombek as a guide, sent them out into the night to teach local Communists, whose names he supplied, a lesson. After unsuccessfully having tried to gain entry to the home of one Florian Schwinge, the SA men raided the cabin Konrad Pietrzuch, a middle-aged unemployed agricultural laborer with Communist sympathies, inhabited with his mother and younger brother Alfons. Having scared the woman into silence and beaten Alfons temporarily unconscious, the militants concentrated on Konrad, kicking and beating him savagely and firing a departing shot at him.²⁸ It was not the bullet that killed Konrad though: In a long and grisly obduction report, the coroner concluded that he had died of a kicked-in larynx, which had filled his lungs with blood.²⁹ As his killers retreated to their van, they were spotted by two patrolling customs officials,

²⁶ Brendan Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 183-184.

²⁷ Richard Bessel, “The Potempa Murder,” *Central European History* 10, no. 3 (September 1977): 244.

²⁸ Verdict, [August 22, 1932]. APO, NPO, 1025.

²⁹ “Vorläufiges Gutachten,” August 13, 1932. BArch, N1110/3.

who apprehended one of the party. His evidence led to the arrest of Lachmann and the others later that morning.³⁰ Their deed would have remained one among many during a summer rife with political violence, if an emergency decree stipulating the death penalty for political murder had not come into effect at midnight. The first to be tried under this decree, the Potempa murderers duly received death sentences from the special court convened at Beuthen. This ruling was met with outrage by the Nazi movement and by the wider German right, who had supported the emergency decree's introduction under the impression that it would be leveled primarily at Communists.³¹ Succumbing to this public pressure, chancellor von Papen in September, less than two weeks after the initial verdict, commuted the sentences to life in prison and the murderers were eventually released in March 1933.³²

If the nation-wide relevance of this most notorious political murder of the late Weimar Republic has been studied, its borderland context has received only superficial treatment. The first scholarly account of the killing, published by West German historian Paul Kluge in 1957, understandably focused on the Potempa case's foreshadowing of things to come. Kluge told how the Nazis, in their initial support for the emergency decree, had even accused the government of not being tough enough and proposed concentration camps for political troublemakers³³ and how later the murderers' attorney had pleaded soldierly obedience as an extenuation, as so many Nazi criminals did after the Second World War.³⁴ In particular, Kluge stressed how the Potempa case showcased that the Nazi movement already held the rule of law to be obsolete and not applicable to it, citing the nationalist apologia for the murder given by Hitler in a Munich speech and

³⁰ Verdict, [August 22, 1932]. APO, NPO, 1025; Witness statements of Karl Söhndel and Karl Burgmaier, August 10, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

³¹ "Die unmöglichen Todesurteile von Beuthen," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, August 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

³² "Staatsministerium hat Potempa-Mörder begnadigt," *Volksstimme*, September 3, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17; Letter to Hermann Göring from Carl Wolzendorff, March 16, 1933. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

³³ Paul Kluge, "Der Fall Potempa," *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 5, no. 3 (July 1957): 281-282.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

by Alfred Rosenberg in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.³⁵ Decades later, Johann Chapoutot's *Le meurtre de Weimar*, which used *Beobachter* coverage as its virtually sole primary source base, took up this interest in Rosenberg's piece, which argued that jurisprudence should be based on the nation's best interests rather than on supposedly arbitrary legal standards, application of which had perversely condemned five Germans to death for the death of one Pole.³⁶ Discourse around the Potempa murder, Kluge and Chapoutot thus both suggested, foreshadowed the Third Reich's utilitarian, nation-centric judicial regimen.

The most influential article about the case, though, is British historian Richard Bessel's 1977 "The Potempa Murder," which provides a detailed account of the killing and its aftermath and spotlights the case's exposure of the shallowness of the Nazis' pursuit of respectability and legality. The party had striven to seize power through electoral politics since hopes for violent take-over were dashed by the failure of the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch. An aura of respectability was key to appealing to segments of society beyond the militant hardliners of the pre-1923 Nazi party and hence to success in the electoral arena. After ever-increasing vote shares in the various elections of 1930 through early 1932, however, by the summer of the latter year this electoral strategy seemed to have exhausted its potential. The NSDAP had, after all, not significantly increased its number of votes in the July *Reichstag* election compared to the presidential and Prussian Diet elections of the spring, suggesting that it might have peaked. And though it was the single largest party, it had not been tasked with forming a government. Frustration among the SA, the party's most militant wing, ran high and found expression in the violence that plagued Germany in early August.³⁷ Violence was particularly rampant in Silesia, where a frustrated regional SA leadership coordinated the "most concerted terror campaign" of

³⁵ Ibid., 284-285.

³⁶ Johann Chapoutot, *Le meurtre de Weimar* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010), 87-94.

³⁷ Bessel, "The Potempa Murder," 253.

that summer.³⁸ When both this regional and the national SA leadership rallied behind the Potempa murderers, Hitler therefore faced a choice: disavow the murderers and retain the electorate's approbation or embrace them and remain in control of the SA. He chose the latter, publicly supporting the murderers.³⁹ It is this casting aside of respectability politics, which, months before the Nazis' assumption of power, exposed Nazism's true nature in all its disrespect for life and the rule of law, for which the Potempa murder, thanks to Bessel, has come to stand.

None of the scholarship on Potempa engages the case's regional, borderland-specific reception with any depth. Kluge and Chapoutot, of course, use the Rosenberg piece as a key illustration of their points about Potempa's portending of the Third Reich's nationalist jurisprudence, but they fail to dig any deeper. Bessel, the most rigorous of the three, does pick up on the Upper Silesian dimension, but only in a narrative, rather than an interpretive, way. His article recounts that "tensions and animosities between German and Pole" were added to the "usual conflicts of German political life" in the border region and that the Nazi party therefore "stressed its opposition to Poles and Poland."⁴⁰ Pietrzuch, a Pole who had reputedly supported the insurgents in 1921 as well as a Communist, was accordingly "an almost perfect target for Nazi hatred,"⁴¹ especially given that "Lachmann and four others" of the murder party "had been born in towns which had fallen to the new Polish state"⁴² and therefore "probably felt a special animosity towards the Poles."⁴³ Bessel also mentions the argument of defense attorney Lowack "that the Potempa case represented a continuation of the struggles of the immediate postwar period: the Communists assumed the place of the insurgent Poles, and

³⁸ Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 87.

³⁹ Bessel, "The Potempa Murder," 251.

⁴⁰ Bessel, "The Potempa Murder," 244.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

the German interests were represented by the Nazis.”⁴⁴ In Bessel’s in any case largely descriptive article these matters remain interesting local facets of a murder whose symptomatic nature for the bigger, national story Bessel is concerned with. For much the same reason, the Potempa case is skipped over, except for a half-sentence mention, in Bessel’s later *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*.⁴⁵ There is little doubt that the nation-wide implications of Hitler’s backing of the murderers that Bessel foregrounds were indeed for contemporaries the case’s principal point of interest, but the number of newspaper clippings and reports about the Nazis’ ethnonationalist justification of the murder that survives in government files in the Prussian Privy State Archive and the State Archive in Opole speaks to its prominence in regional discourse. Given the fragmentary nature of the East Elbian newspaper record it is well-nigh impossible to know precisely how much of the coverage about the case this particular strand of exculpatory reporting constituted. Considering, however, that it made up about half the coverage in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, is amply documented in government files, and even sparked a government investigation, this ethnonationalist defense deserves more in-depth examination than has thus far been the case.

The central tenet of this ethnonationalist apologia was that the victim had been only a Pole and a former insurgent and that it was therefore unjust to sentence five patriotic Germans to death on account of someone so unworthy, with right-wing reporting playing up both the victim’s nationality and the numerical disproportion. Hitler himself declared in a speech in Munich in early September that, “Never would five German men be condemned because of one Pole in a National Socialist *Reich*,” a point his party’s press had made repeatedly in the previous weeks.⁴⁶ Joseph Goebbels’ *Der Angriff*, for instance, had run a headline reading “A Communist Polish insurgent is

⁴⁴ Ibid., 250.

⁴⁵ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 91.

⁴⁶ “Im nationalsozialistischen Reich würden niemals fünf deutsche Männer wegen eines Polen verurteilt werden.”; “Hitler über die politische Lage,” *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, September 8, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

shot... a German court passes five death sentences: The horror-verdict [*Schreckensurteil*] of Beuthen must never ever be executed.”⁴⁷ Another piece in the same paper asked, “Who dares execute the five condemned workers?” when, as their victim had been a “Polish insurgent,” their executor would have to fear being forever shamed and ostracized by Germany’s nationalists.⁴⁸ The *Völkischer Beobachter* similarly titled an article “The death sentences must never be executed: The life of five Germans – among them frontline soldiers – is worth more than one Polish traitor.”⁴⁹ Even after the sentences had been commuted, the paper continued to rail against the judicial system, proclaiming that “They [the murderers] do not want clemency, they want the reopening of the trial.” After all, only a renewed hearing could prove that the original verdict had been an error in terms not just of law but also of state policy, for it had put one insurgent before “five German frontline fighters and *Selbstschutz* folk.”⁵⁰ The regional Nazi paper *Deutsche Ostfront* likewise scorned the sentence’s lightening: “And for this inhuman Polish beast five German men shall languish between prison walls for life!”⁵¹ A few days later the *Ostfront* reiterated: “For a Polish scoundrel five German men shall slowly languish between prison walls. We won’t rest until this ignominy is redeemed through an acquittal!”⁵² Non-Nazi nationalist papers agreed. The *Schlesische Zeitung* opined that five death sentences were far too many to pay for the death of a single man, who was in any case only “a former insurgent and then Communist, besides a drunk and a rowdy.”⁵³ The *Deutsche Zeitung*,

⁴⁷ “Ein kommunistischer polnischer Insurgent wird erschossen... Ein deutsches Gericht fällt fünf Todesurteile: Das Schreckensurteil von Beuthen darf nie und nimmer vollstreckt werden,” *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁴⁸ “Wer wagt es, die fünf verurteilten Arbeiter hinzurichten?,” *Der Angriff*, August 24, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁴⁹ “Die Todesurteile dürfen niemals vollstreckt werden: Das Leben von fünf Deutschen - darunter Frontsoldaten - ist mehr wert als ein polnischer Landesverräter,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 25, 1932. CUL.

⁵⁰ “fünf deutsche Frontkämpfer und Selbstschutzleute”; “Sie wollen keine Gnade, sondern Wiederaufnahme des Verfahrens,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, September 4/5, 1932. CUL.

⁵¹ “Der wahre Pieczuch!,” *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 4/5, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

⁵² Advertisement, *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 14, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

⁵³ “früher Insurgent, dann Kommunist, im übrigen ein Säufer und Radaubruder”; “Gegen das Urteil von Beuthen!,” *Schlesische Zeitung*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

meanwhile, reported that rural Upper Silesia and the region's now-Polish part were in "uproar" because of the verdict, with the populace protesting that the victim had been only a Polish insurgent.⁵⁴ This "uproar over the blood verdict," the *Völkischer Beobachter* averred, was owed to the court's failure to take into consideration either Upper Silesia's past or the circumstance that the struggle against Communism there was not just one against a political party but one against a force that fought "German culture and everything that is German."⁵⁵ As a former insurgent and a "Communist traitor" to boot, the *Angriff* agreed, Pietrzuch should have had no claim to the protection of the German justice system, which had erred gravely when it extended rights to the victim and condemned his German murderers.⁵⁶ The *Schlesische Zeitung*, meanwhile, remarked censoriously, "In Upper Silesia one can understand even less how judges familiar with the region could arrive at such a draconian verdict," especially since a decade previously an amnesty for political crimes had allowed the insurgents to go free in spite of having committed all manner of cruelties.⁵⁷ The *Ostfront*, as usual, put it yet more bluntly, writing that the Potempa verdict "appears as if handed down by a Polish court martial," not like one returned by a court in a town that had itself experienced occupation by Polish insurgents. The judges, the paper maintained, had with this verdict allied themselves with Poland.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ "Erregung"; "Der Kampf gegen die Todesurteile," *Deutsche Zeitung*, August 24, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁵⁵ "Erregung über das Bluturteil," "die deutsche Kultur und alles, was deutsch heißt"; "Die Aufnahme der 'Begnadigung' bei den Verurteilten und ihren Familien," *Völkischer Beobachter*, September 4/5, 1932. CUL.

⁵⁶ "kommunistischer Hochverräter"; "So denken wir - so denkt das Volk," *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁵⁷ "Man kann um so weniger in Oberschlesien es verstehen, wie landeskundige Richter ein derartig drakonisches Urteil fällen konnten."; "Gegen das Urteil von Beuthen!," *Schlesische Zeitung*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁵⁸ "mutet an wie von einem polnischen Kriegsgericht gesprochen"; "War der Insurgent Pieczuch an Deutschenmetzelei in Tworog und Zawadzki beteiligt?," *Deutsche Ostfront*, August 31, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

Nationality and personal history were also brought to bear to reinforce the exploitation of the contrast between the sentences in the Potempa and Ohlau cases.⁵⁹ In the Lower Silesian small town of Ohlau a street fight between the Social Democratic *Reichsbanner* and SA men had broken out a week before the Potempa murder when they were returning from their respective election rallies. In this fray, two SA men were killed. The responsible *Reichsbanner* men received only prison terms, because the deaths had taken place before the emergency decree took effect. In an impolitic coincidence, these correct but comparatively light sentences were announced on the very same day as the death sentences for the Potempa murderers.⁶⁰ Consequently, the Nazis could portray themselves as more harshly treated by the law than their Marxist opponents, an angle taken up by the wider right-wing press. Indeed, the argument ran, they were treated more severely even though *their* victim had been only a Pole and insurgent. In an article that accused the Marxist parties and the government of collusion with the Poles, the *Angriff* described the contrast between the Ohlau and Potempa verdicts as a prime example of the workings of the “new ‘Unity Front’ between Social Democracy and the camouflaged Polish bands.”⁶¹ The SA murder party, Silesian borderland fighters all, had thought the Ohlau deaths had to be avenged. “Now one of these Polish insurgents and Bolshevik cutthroats has been killed. The criminals of the new Polish-Social Democratic Unity Front got away with laughably light punishments. Five German Silesians, however, were condemned to death,” the *Angriff* fumed.⁶² The *Schlesische Zeitung* concurred: “On the one hand the systematically prepared and bestially executed attack of the *Reichsbanner* on differently minded *Volksgenossen* was punished with prison, while the elimination of a Pole, who it is known was active in the service of Poland repeatedly, shall be avenged

⁵⁹ Bessel, “The Potempa Murder,” 251; Kluge, “Der Fall Potempa,” 282-283.

⁶⁰ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 85-86.

⁶¹ “der neuen ‘Einheitsfront’ zwischen Sozialdemokratie und getarnten polnischen Banden”; “So denken wir - so denkt das Volk,” *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁶² “Nun ist einer dieser polnischen Insurgenten und bolschewistischen Mordbuben getötet worden. Die Verbrecher der neuen polnische-sozialdemokratischen Einheitsfront kamen mit lächerlich geringen Strafen davon. Fünf deutsche Schlesier aber wurden zum Tode verurteilt.”; Ibid.

with the death of five German *Volksgenossen*.”⁶³ In a late September speech before 13,000 to 14,000 spectators in Kiel, Goebbels too proclaimed that “...there is a difference, when 5 front soldiers eliminate a Polish insurgent, who fought with a Polish weapon in hand against Germans, or when a German SA man is eliminated by Marxists.” The verdict, which disadvantaged Germany’s own people, Goebbels contended, “would not have been possible in another state.”⁶⁴

This contempt for Pietrzuch and his rights was rationalized through extensive reporting about insurgency-era cruelties attributed to him. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, for instance, ridiculed the idea of Pietrzuch as an innocent victim when it published a story reportedly shared under oath by a certain Gertrud Kaluza from Hindenburg under the title “This was the ‘poor’ Pietrzuch! And because of this subject 5 Germans shall be delivered to the executioner.”⁶⁵ In 1921, readers were told, Kaluza had worked selling butter door-to-door. In the course of her itinerant trading, she had one day come across a band of insurgents, recognizing Pietrzuch among them from having plied her trade in Potempa. They had, “under rude insults of my Germandom,” demanded her wares.⁶⁶ When she refused, they beat and kicked her until she was bleeding from her head and back, then made off with her goods. The Nazi daily, borrowing from the regional *Deutsche Ostfront*, ran another testimonial two weeks later, this one from a funeral director from Königshütte.⁶⁷ Reportedly, Pietrzuch and his insurgent gang had threatened this man that

⁶³ “Auf der einen Seite wird der planmäßig vorbereitete und bestialisch durchgeführte Überfall des Reichsbanners auf andersdenkende Volksgenossen mit Zuchthaus bestraft, während die Beseitigung eines Polen, der bekanntermaßen sich in polnischen Diensten wiederholt betätigt hat, mit dem Tode von fünf deutschen Volksgenossen geahndet werden soll.”; “Begnädigung erforderlich. von unserem Berliner Büro.” *Schlesische Zeitung*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁶⁴ “Er führte aus, daß es ein Unterschied sei, wenn 5 Frontsoldaten einen polnischen Insurgenten, der mit einer polnischen Waffe in der Fasut [sic] gegen Deutsche gekämpft habe, beseitigten, oder wenn ein deutscher S.A.-Mann von Marxisten beseitigt würde. Weiter sagte der Redner, daß das Urteil gegen die 5 S.A.-Männer in einem anderen Staat nicht möglich gewesen wäre.”; Report, September 23, 1932. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4561.

⁶⁵ “Das war der ‘arme’ Pietrzuch! Und wegen dieses Subjektes sollen 5 Deutsche dem Henker ausgeliefert werden,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 28/29, 1932. CUL.

⁶⁶ “unter wüsten Beschimpfungen meines Deutschtums”; Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Der wahre Pieczuch!,” *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 4/5, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

they would kill him and his family with hand grenades if they did not quit Königshütte within two hours. His apartment and mortuary, he was told, would be taken over by one of the insurgents' friends from Potempa. He later got another glimpse into the insurgents' brutality when he was tasked with giving seven German residents of a miners' dormitory a proper burial, after they had had to dig their own graves in a forest and been murdered by Pietrzuch's band.⁶⁸ A further *Ostfront* article, titled "Was the insurgent Pieczuch involved in the butchery of Germans [*Deutschenmetzelei*] in Tworog and Zawadzki?," accused Pietrzuch of having been a notorious "brute and sadist," who had been a leading figure in the reign of terror the insurgents had allegedly unleashed in the area around Tworog. A chauffeur testified to this effect that Pietrzuch and his accomplices had threatened him while he was on the job and that he had only managed to escape because he had been able to make a convincing excuse in Polish.⁶⁹

The flipside of the right-wing press' vilification of Pietrzuch was its extolling of the murderers as model Germans who had belonged to the highly respected ranks of former *Selbstschutz* fighters. Praise of the killers in these terms was often paired with vituperation against the alleged insurgent Pietrzuch, as when the *Angriff* wrote: "We have already reported on the petitions for death sentences in the Beuthen special court process against nine accused National Socialists and *Selbstschutz* men, who had killed the notorious Communist ruffian and Polish insurgent Pietrzuch in Potempa.... Could the judges follow the petitions of the public prosecutor? Could they manage to condemn to death nationalist Silesians who had once stood their ground against the rapacious Pollacks and who now fight back against the Polish blood terror hidden behind a Communist mask?"⁷⁰ Yet more notably, other articles not only portrayed the murderers

⁶⁸ "Neues Belastungsmaterial gegen den Insurgenten Pietrzuch," *Völkischer Beobachter*, September 6, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁶⁹ "Rohling und Sadist"; "War der Insurgent Pieczuch an Deutschenmetzelei in Tworog und Zawadzki beteiligt?," *Deutsche Ostfront*, August 31, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

⁷⁰ "Wir berichteten bereits über die Todesstrafen-Anträge im Beutehener sondergerichts-Prozeß gegen neun angeklagte Nationalsozialisten und Selbstschutzleute, die in Potempa den berüchtigten kommunistischen Raufbold und polnischen Insurgenten Pietrzuch getötet hatten. Konnten die Richter den Anträgen des

as deserving of mercy due to their *Selbstschutz* history but even attributed their deed to tensions between Poles and Germans that had carried over into the present from the region's recent past. Pietrzuch, the *Angriff* charged, was not just a former insurgent but even now had become a Communist "in order to let his hatred against the German *Selbstschutz* people," who were these days to be found in the Nazi ranks, "run riot."⁷¹ The murderers, meanwhile, were commonly described as motivated by *Selbstschutz* memories and practices. The *Angriff*, for example, related in gory detail how their memories of Polish atrocities were etched into former *Selbstschutz* fighters' brains, how much these images of "gouged-out eyes," "lacerated and mutilated bodies," and "cut-off limbs" continued to affect them, implying that these haunting recollections had played their part in the murder.⁷² In another article, which also once again made the assertion that virtually all *Selbstschutz* men were now SA members, the *Angriff* outright declared the murderers "soldiers of the border" and their deed one that "cannot be judged according to dead juridical formulas."⁷³ After all, it had been committed by men who had "experienced first-hand what it meant to be a borderlander for Germany" in the course of a struggle that continued now under the guise of party politics.⁷⁴ More brazen yet, the far-right *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* contended that the killers had "acted as former *Selbstschutz* folks in the mistaken, but for that not less strong belief, that with the elimination of a former Polish insurgent they were doing something, which can be

Staatsanwalts folgen? Brachten sie es fertig, über nationale Schlesier, die gegen den raublustigen Pollacken einst ihren Mann gestanden hatten und sich jetzt gegen den unter kommunistischer Maske verkappten polnischen Blutterror zur Wehr setzten, den Stab zu brechen?"; "Ein kommunistischer polnischer Insurgent wird erschossen... Ein deutsches Gericht fällt fünf Todesurteile: Das Schreckensurteil von Beuthen darf nie und nimmer vollstreckt werden," *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁷¹ "um seinen Haß gegen die deutschen Selbstschutzleute austoben zu können"; Ibid.

⁷² "an die ausgestochenen Augen, an die zerfetzten und verstümmelten Leiber, an die abgeschnittenen Gliedmaßen"; "So denken wir - so denkt das Volk," *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁷³ "Die fünf Verurteilten sind Soldaten der Grenze. Ihre Tat kann man nicht nach toten juristischen Formeln beurteilen."; "Wer wagt es, die fünf verurteilten Arbeiter hinzurichten?," *Der Angriff*, August 24, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁷⁴ "Sie haben am eigenen Leibe gespürt, was es heißt, für Deutschland Grenzer zu sein."; Ibid.

justified and which 11 years ago was done repeatedly in national self-defense.”⁷⁵ They had simply failed to assimilate the knowledge that norms had changed since the paramilitary war of 1921.

The murderers’ heroization and the sense of grievance at their being sacrificed for the death of a single Pole is exemplified particularly strikingly by a piece in the *Völkischer Beobachter* consisting of interviews with the convicts’ wives and sisters, many of whom told of the men’s suffering and valor during and after the plebiscite period. One man’s sister reportedly proclaimed, “As the sister of the SA man August Gräupner, who was condemned to death and who was an Upper Silesian *Selbstschutz* fighter and defended the German *Heimat* against Poland, I declare that my reason threatened to stand still at the announcement of the verdict.”⁷⁶ Another’s wife told how her husband had defended Upper Silesia as a *Selbstschutz* fighter and how he had in recent years been victimized by the “Polish Communists” of his home village to such an extent that he had had to move to the Broslawitz SA hostel for safety.⁷⁷ The story of ringleader Paul Lachmann’s wife was most expansive. After having spent four and a half years at the front during the war, Lachmann, who had always been an activist for Germandom, had campaigned for Germany during the plebiscite and had had to flee his home village when it instead fell to Poland. Having endured several years of hardship as a refugee, Lachmann had then built up a new life for himself in Potempa. In all these women’s tales insurgents were the enemy and they were united in their inability to believe that their good, brave borderlanders were to be executed for one such man. One

⁷⁵ “Die Verurteilten handelten als ehemalige Selbstschutzleute in dem zwar irrigen, aber deshalb nicht weniger starken Glauben, mit der Beseitigung eines ehemaligen polnischen Aufständischen etwas zu tun, was sich verantworten läßt und was vor 11 Jahren in nationaler Notwehr wiederholt getan worden ist.”; “Die unmöglichen Todesurteile von Beuthen,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, August 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

⁷⁶ “Als Schwester des zum Tode verurteilten S.A.-Mannes August Gräupner, welcher ober-schlesischer Selbstschutzkämpfer war und die deutsche Heimat gegen Polen verteidigte, erkläre ich, daß mir bei Bekanntgabe des Urteils der Verstand stillzustehen drohte.”; “So denken die Frauen unserer verurteilten Kameraden!,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 25, 1932. CUL.

⁷⁷ “polnischen Kommunisten”; Ibid.

woman remarked: “‘But one thing I could not understand, that here so many death sentences were handed down because of one insurgent.’”⁷⁸

None of the murderers mentioned ethnicity or nationalist tensions in the surviving interrogations and even at the trial it was only the junior defense attorney who, in his concluding speech, brought up regional history as an extenuating circumstance. Nevertheless, this nationalist narrative about the Potempa murder was taken up by the right-wing press and by nationalist organizations. Many respected right-wing organizations tendered their support. The Upper Silesian *Stahlhelm* and the *Selbstschutz* Gleiwitz both sent telegrams to von Papen, arguing that the crime’s borderland background “‘warrants a milder assessment of the deed’.”⁷⁹ It should be recognized, the *Stahlhelm* further argued, that the killers had acted out of a belief, widely shared in Upper Silesia, in a nationalist “right to self-defense” and the *Selbstschutz* alleged that even Upper Silesians of differing political convictions disagreed with a verdict that ordered the death of one Polish insurgent to be compensated by the execution of five *Selbstschutz* veterans.⁸⁰ The *Deutscher Ostbund* concurred that the borderlands setting meant that the Potempa murderers could not be considered common “‘political bandits’.”⁸¹ Calls for clemency were also submitted by the Pan-German League and the *Arbeitskreis für ostdeutsches Schrifttum*,⁸² and a German National women’s league declared that it was really the League of Nations that belonged on the defendant’s bench, given that “Potempa is the fruit of the dismemberment of Upper Silesia.”⁸³ Even the Gleiwitz branch of the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier* wrote to the government to explain that it was only the resistance by *Selbstschutz*, *Stahlhelm*, and SA that had kept Polish voters,

⁷⁸ “Aber eines konnte ich nicht verstehen, daß hier wegen eines Insurgenten so viel Todesurteile gefällt wurden.”; Ibid.

⁷⁹ “‘eine mildere Beurteilung der Tat’”; Report, September 2, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

⁸⁰ “Notwehrrecht”; Ibid.

⁸¹ “‘politischen Banditen’”; “Stellungnahme des Deutschen Ostbundes,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, August 26, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

⁸² “Weitere Proteste gegen das Beuthener Bluturteil,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 28/29, 1932. CUL.

⁸³ “‘Potempa ist die Frucht der Zerreißung Oberschlesien [sic].’”; Report, September 2, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

who had swelled the ranks of the Communist party, at bay. Executing the Potempa murderers would therefore hardly fulfill the emergency decree's objective of calming the public mood.⁸⁴ The government, right-wing papers claimed, could only be hesitating to give way to requests for pardon because it did not want to be seen as weak for baulking at execution at the emergency decree's first application. However, clemency would actually strengthen the state's authority, it was argued, by exchanging one-size-fits-all justice imposed by Berlin for sensitivity regarding regional specificities.⁸⁵ Kurt Urbanek, the German Democratic Party *Landrat* for Beuthen-Tarnowitz and German plebiscite commissar from 1920 to 1922, alluded to this strand of the Potempa discourse when he and his fellow district councilors asked von Papen for clemency. While they condemned the murder and understood the state's need to maintain its authority, they wrote, they were moved to call for a pardon in the name of that already too plentiful blood that had flowed in Upper Silesia after the war.⁸⁶ Urbanek was a liberal nationalist and an opponent of the Nazis and yet even he, out of conviction or political necessity, accepted a narrative that invoked nationalist tropes as justification for murder.

In other instances too, Nazis dressed up political animosities in starkly ethnonationalist invective. Albert Grzesinski, the Social Democratic Prussian minister of the interior, occasionally became the target of such racist rhetorical attacks, because his last name sounded Polish. East Prussia's *Gauleiter* Erich Koch, for instance, wedded genealogical to political contempt for Grzesinski in a 1929 speech in Pomeranian Lauenburg, in which he sneered that "People like Minister of the Interior Grzesinski, the son of a maid, who served in the house of a Pole and was adopted by him etc., would

⁸⁴ "Die Erregung über das Beuthener Urteil," *Schlesische Zeitung*, August 24, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

⁸⁵ "Begnadigung erforderlich. von unserem Berliner Büro." *Schlesische Zeitung*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218; "War der Insurgent Pieczuch an Deutschenmetzelei in Tworog und Zawadzki beteiligt?," *Deutsche Ostfront*, August 31, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025; "Im Interesse der Staatsautorität: Wir fordern Begnadigung," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, August 24, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

⁸⁶ Letter from the district council Beuthen-Tarnowitz to von Papen, August 25, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

rejoice if we were not represented in parliament.”⁸⁷ In 1931, Nazi itinerant speaker Helmut Richter repeatedly made similar jibes about Grzesinski while touring Eastern Pomerania. Speaking, like Koch, in Lauenburg on two occasions a week apart, Richter both times called Grzesinski the son of a “Polish maid,” once adding that his father had been “the Jew Cohn.” In speeches in Fiddichow and Groß Sabow, Richter took issue with Grzesinski having been made police president of Berlin, when he, a “Pollack,” was the son of a “Polish reaper” and the “Jew Cohn” whom she had served.⁸⁸ In Ankerholz, he stressed Grzesinski’s supposed illegitimate birth as the son of a “Polish reaper” and a Jew.⁸⁹ Richter was tried and sentenced for both the slanderous allegation of illegitimacy⁹⁰ and his anti-Semitism, but his insults were at least equally anti-Polish – and, moreover, almost entirely fabricated.⁹¹ Grzesinski had actually been born Albert Lehmann, the illegitimate son of a Berlin maid and a butcher’s apprentice, and had taken the last name of his stepfather Thomas Grzesinski, who had adopted him.⁹² Richter’s were thus falsities evidently designed to harness ethnic to political hostilities.

In 1931, the aspersions on ethnic grounds against police inspector Schiwy, the key witness in a case against nationally prominent Nazi speaker Ludwig Münchmeyer, also attracted debate. Schiwy had monitored and eventually shut down a rally in Gleiwitz with Münchmeyer, in which the latter had insulted (former) ministers Stresemann and Severing, Friedrich Ebert, and the *Reich* colors and imputed that the aforementioned politicians had violated the constitution.⁹³ In a notable addition to an article otherwise

⁸⁷ “Leute wie der Innenminister Grzesinski, der Sohn eines Dienstmädchens, das im Hause eines Polen diente und von diesem adoptiert wurde usw., würden sich freuen, wenn wir nicht im Parlament vertreten werden.”; “Betrifft: Bericht über eine öffentliche Versammlung der National-Sozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiter-Partei Ortsgruppe Lauenburg Pom.,” June 14, 1929. APK, RK, 4363.

⁸⁸ Verdict, [1931]. APK, RK, 4363.

⁸⁹ Report, January 24, 1931. APK, RK, 4363.

⁹⁰ Verdict, August 13, 1931. APK, RK, 4363.

⁹¹ Verdict, [1931]. APK, RK, 4363.

⁹² “Grzesinski, Albert Karl Wilhelm,” *Deutsche Biographie*, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz24423.html>.

⁹³ “Narbenforscher Münchmeyer freigesprochen,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, November 11, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

identical to one run in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the *Schlesischer Beobachter* reported that Münchmeyer had responded to the meeting's closure with accusations that Schiwy had been an insurgent back in 1921 and did not really speak German.⁹⁴ The latter allegation resurfaced at the trial, when Schiwy, suffering of tonsillitis, exhibited poor pronunciation and Münchmeyer's attorney, seizing on the inspector's impaired speech, asked him what his mother tongue was. Schiwy's protests that the question was irrelevant to the case the lawyer brushed aside with the argument that if German were not his first language, then his German proficiency and hence his reliability as a witness was dubitable. At the judge's request Schiwy eventually answered, acknowledging that he, like most Upper Silesians, understood Polish but emphasizing his tonsillitis and his otherwise perfect command of German, well known to his superiors.⁹⁵ Münchmeyer's eventual acquittal had nothing to do with his impugning of Schiwy, but he nevertheless subsequently portrayed the case as if it had.⁹⁶ In a letter to Severing penned a week after the trial and requesting a lifting of the speaking bans several Prussian cities had placed on him, Münchmeyer argued that these prohibitions were based on suppositions that he insulted opponents and fostered disorder that were untrue. Just in this last case it had been shown, Münchmeyer lied, that the main witness for the prosecution had had a deficient command of German.⁹⁷ As the Nazi press had done with the Potempa verdict, Münchmeyer thus turned an ordinary political row into an ethnically-laden one when all else had failed.

Religion was, by and large, not employed as ammunition in such race-based ad hominem attacks, but the Catholic Center party as a whole was vilified occasionally as overly Polonophile. For two of Abel's respondents from Upper Silesia the experience of the clergy's and the Center Party's putative support for the Polish side during the

⁹⁴ "Sie können die Wahrheit nicht vertrete[illegible]," *Schlesischer Beobachter*, January 3, 1931. APO, RO, 1802; "Polizeilich aufgelöst," *Völkischer Beobachter*, December 28/29, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

⁹⁵ Report to the police president, February 23, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

⁹⁶ Copy of verdict, November 30, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

⁹⁷ Letter to Severing, November 21, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

plebiscite campaign was a radicalizing one.⁹⁸ More than a decade later, the Potempa verdict prompted the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* to note that at the trial “a Center man [the attorney?] had behaved as a passionate Communist protector.”⁹⁹ This circumstance suggested, the paper speculated, that “Perhaps this combination: Center and Communists is the next, which we will experience, a new edition of the old link between the Center and the Poles and caused by the Poles in the nests of [coal] pits having now become Communists.”¹⁰⁰ The Center, after all, “always marches with those, who do not walk in step with the national Beuthen.”¹⁰¹

Oftentimes, however, attacks on the Center were rooted in the same type of accusations also applied to other republican parties. When a newspaper editor affiliated with the Center criticized regional SA leader Edmund Heines for riling up his subordinates about the Potempa verdict, for example, the *Deutsche Ostfront* jeered that someone, whose party was full of “creatures, who have never fulfilled their duty toward the *Heimat*” and boasted Carl Spieker, “the specialist for *Feme* executions,” among its members, had no right to vilify the SA chief.¹⁰² The Social Democrats too had been lambasted in the context of the Potempa case for failing to support the SA in its struggle against the Poles, much as it had once called nationalist Germans to Silesia to defend the region and then

⁹⁸ G. Goretzki, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>; August Marleiter, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/span-classqueryhlaugustspan-span-classqueryhlma?ctx=5e111d47-774a-4fa1-8590-ddbf637551e9&idx=0>.

⁹⁹ “daß ein Zentrumsmann als Kommunistenschützer von Passion auftrat”; “Das Urteil von Beuthen: Unmöglich, es zu vollstrecken!,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, August 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹⁰⁰ “Vielleicht ist diese Verbindung: Zentrum und Kommunisten die nächste, die wir erleben, eine neue Auflage der alten Verbindung Zentrum und Polen und dadurch bedingt, daß die Polen in den Grubennestern nun eben Kommunisten geworden sind.”; *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ “...das liebe Zentrum marschirt immer mit denen, die nicht im gleichen Schritt und Tritt mit dem nationalen Beuthen gehen.”; *Ibid.*

¹⁰² “Das - ausgerechnet in Oberschlesien, das - ausgerechnet von einem Zentrumsbruder, der doch den ehrenwerten Herrn Spieker, den Spezialisten für Femerichtungen als Prominenten zu seiner Herde zählt, das - ausgerechnet von Kreaturen, die niemals ihre Pflicht der Heimat gegenüber freiwillig erfüllt haben.”; “Unverschämte Frechheiten des Oppelner ‘Kurier’-Schneider,” *Deutsche Ostfront*, August 24, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

soon after turned them over to the judges for *Feme* trials.¹⁰³ In the Border Province, meanwhile, a 1930 so-called *vaterländische Kundgebung* with Prussian minister for justice Dr. Hermann Schmidt, organized by the Center Party branch in Meseritz, met with the local far right's scorn because an event hosted by the Center could allegedly never be truly patriotic due to the party's collaboration with the “anti-clerical Social Democracy,” *echoing invectives equating the Center with Marxism that Nazis spewed nationwide*.¹⁰⁴ In response, the republican *Grenzwacht* ran a commentary, apparently penned by the Center party, which condemned the DNVP and *Stahlhelm* as hypocritical for claiming a monopoly on patriotism when they had soon afterwards held a recruitment event aimed at Catholics. “The border is too close that one may dare to deny a strong third of the inhabitants of a county, which lies close to the Polish border, patriotic views out of petty partisan reasons,” the Center's statement added.¹⁰⁵ The border was thus brought into the dispute, but the original attack had not been border-related at all.

When Nazis did try to make politics about ethnicity, their opponents had a choice of responses: They could either stress the distinction between ethnicity and chosen, civic nationality or engage the Nazis on their own ethnonationalist terms. In the Potempa case, the opposition chose this latter approach. It did naturally insist that even if he had been an “inferior person” – a Communist and a Pole – the SA men had not been entitled “to preempt the divine judgement over Konrad Pietrzuch.”¹⁰⁶ If nationalist animosity became a blank check to kill, the state's authority would, after all, be undermined and vigilante justice effectively legitimized.¹⁰⁷ More interestingly, however, some pieces challenged

¹⁰³ “So denken wir - so denkt das Volk,” *Der Angriff*, August 23, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

¹⁰⁴ “kirchenfeindlichen Sozialdemokratie”; “Die ‘überparteiliche’ M.P.Z.,” *Die Grenzwacht*, [August 1930]. APP, NPP, 157.

¹⁰⁵ “Dazu ist die Grenze zu nahe, daß man es wagen dürfe, aus engherzigen parteipolitischen Gründen einem starken Drittel der Bewohner eines Kreises, der dicht an der polnischen Grenze liegt, die vaterländische Gesinnung abzusprechen!"; Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “ein minderwertiger Mensch,” “dem göttlichen Urteil über Konrad Pietrzuch vorzugreifen”; Article, *Oppelner Kurier*, August 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the Nazi narratives' ascription of clear national sides to the Potempa case's various actors. The *Neue Zeitung*, for instance, claimed to have dispatched a reporter to interview residents of Potempa and nearby Tworog about Pietrzuch. He had found, the paper reported, that the Pietrzuch family had been well-respected. Konrad and his brother had fought in the war and Konrad had afterwards belonged to a *Grenzschutz* division until April 1919, then returned home to Potempa to support his mother and the still-underage Alfons. In 1921, he fought alongside the village's other Germans to protect Potempa from the insurgents and certainly had never been one of their number himself. None of the villages' older residents could remember the gruesome episodes supposedly involving Pietrzuch recounted in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. In the mid-1920s Konrad had further been dismissed from his job at a foundry in Polish Upper Silesia alongside other Germans who had refused to opt for Poland. He had subsequently been employed by the German state railways until becoming unemployed in 1931. Lachmann, in contrast, was, the *Neue Zeitung* claimed, a petty tyrant, who withheld welfare funds from villagers of differing political persuasions and was so unpopular even with his fellow local councilors that they had not written to request clemency.¹⁰⁸ The *Deutsche Ostfront* rebutted this portrayal with its own purportedly first-hand account from Potempa. Lachmann, their reporter maintained, was an integral member of a tight-knit village community, which encompassed all Germans regardless of political affiliation. Only former insurgents, like Pietrzuch, suffered exclusion.¹⁰⁹

Pietrzuch, whose mother and brother had had to be interrogated with the help of a translator, probably *was* from a Polish-speaking background, though his insurgent past remains unproven.¹¹⁰ More fruitful a tactic than disputing Pietrzuch's Polish-ness was casting doubt on his murderers' German bona fides. This was the tack taken by the

¹⁰⁸ "Die Nazi-Lügner und Verleumder am Pranger," *Neue Zeitung*, August 31, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹⁰⁹ "Konrad Pieczuch, 'der Schrecken von Potempa'," *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 2, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹¹⁰ Report, [August 24, 1932]. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

explosive article “Hitler’s comrade – an insurgent and traitor” in the regional Social Democratic newspaper *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, which charged that one of the murder party, August Gräupner, had joined the Friedenshütte *Selbstschutz* as an “agent provocateur” in 1920.¹¹¹ As a result of his treachery many fighters were allegedly arrested and sentenced to extended prison terms by the French. When the French cleared out a weapons depot Gräupner had betrayed to them, his comrades deduced the spy’s identity and handed down a *Feme* verdict. Such unofficial death sentences were regularly carried out by the *Freikorps* of the immediate post-war years, but Gräupner managed to escape to the Polish side and, the *Volksblatt* claimed, fought as an insurgent against the Germans. When the French withdrew from the region, Gräupner left with them, joining the Foreign Legion. Only when he had been expelled from the Legion a few years previously had he returned to Upper Silesia, where he had joined the NSDAP.¹¹² The story was quickly picked up by the national Social Democratic daily *Vorwärts*,¹¹³ at which point it sparked an inconclusive government investigation into its veracity.¹¹⁴ Nazi journals naturally staunchly denied the accusations, with the *Völkischer Beobachter* on one occasion running a putative letter from an erstwhile *Selbstschutz* leader, which claimed that it had in reality been Pietrzuch who had committed the wrongs now laid at Gräupner’s feet.¹¹⁵ No other allegation unfolded the same reach, but others involved in the case also had their Germandom questioned. The *Neue Zeitung*, for one, published a list of Nazis who were connected with the Potempa case or had been active in a nearby party branch and who, allegedly, had been active for Poland in the plebiscite era. Besides Gräupner, two other SA men implicated in the murder and the father of a third

¹¹¹ “Agent-Provokateur”; “Hitlers Kamerad - ein Insurgent und Verräter,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, [August 1932]. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ “‘Alte Kameraden.’ Pietrzuch-Mörder Gräupner ein Insurgent und französischer Spion,” *Vorwärts*, August 28, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

¹¹⁴ Letter to the *Regierungspräsident*, September 8, 1932. APO, RO, 1806; Drobczyk’s testimony, August 30, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

¹¹⁵ “Die schlesischen Selbstschutzkämpfer rühren sich,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, September 2, 1932. CUL.

featured.¹¹⁶ The *Volksblatt*, meanwhile, found another target in Lowack, the murderers' junior defense attorney, who in his concluding speech had urged the judges to take into consideration the region's history and mentality and the special animosity that was bound to prevail between nationalist Germans and a Pole. Yet Lowack was himself, the *Volksblatt* maintained, "a typical renegade."¹¹⁷ While his mother was an ardent German Nationalist People's Party deputy, her father had been a Paul Wolny from Pless county, one of the most heavily Polish-speaking in Upper Silesia and since 1921 part of Poland. Wolny had been a Polish Catholic who spoke barely any German and his other children were, for their part, an ardently Polish Carmelite nun on the one hand and a deceased priest and "eager Pole," who had taught Polish at a German *Gymnasium*, on the other.¹¹⁸ So much, the *Volksblatt* remarked, for "'racial purity'."¹¹⁹ Much as Lowack valorized Germanism neither he – nor his clients – met their ideology's exacting racial standards.

Such allegations tried to puncture Nazis' racist hubris by employing the same simplistic and fixed national categories, but other challenges rejected this facile equating of ethnicity and nationality and pointed up the Nazi movement's own failures to enforce the concepts' supposed identity. In the wake of the Potempa verdict, one article thus pointed out that Pietrzuch, even should he have voted for Poland in the plebiscite in what was then an almost purely Polish village, was not necessarily therefore any less genuinely German now. After all, the 120 residents of Potempa who in the July election had cast their ballot for the Nazi party had in all probability voted the same way in 1921. The village's Nazis were thus "Polish scoundrels" just as much as Pietrzuch and inborn ethnicity little guide to nationality or the value of human life.¹²⁰ The *Nowiny Codzienne* concurred that the circumstance that "there is as big a percentage of insurgent Poles in the

¹¹⁶ "So sehen die nationalsozialistischen Helden aus," *Neue Zeitung*, August 26, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹¹⁷ "typischer Renegat"; "Rechtsanwalt Lowaks polnischer Stammbaum," *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, August 25, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹¹⁸ "ein heißer Pole"; Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "'Rassenreinheit'"; Ibid.

¹²⁰ "polnische Kanaille"; "Potempa in neuem Licht," September 15, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

National Socialist party as in the Communist party” spoke against pardoning the murderers on the grounds of their victim’s ethnicity, for Nazis of Polish descent would hardly want to see their lives devalued.¹²¹

In fact, the *Oberschlesischer Volksbote* had already derisively commented on the high proportion of former insurgents in the SA a few days before the Potempa murder and warned against the consequences this circumstance might have. On August 5, the paper told how a band of SA men, among them a certain Donner, beat up a laborer because one in his group of harvesters had jokingly responded “*Heil Moscow*” to their shout of “*Heil Hitler*.” It observed: “It is interesting that Donner went through that strange political development like many from the elite of the brown army. Donner was initially an insurgent, then a Communist and now a Nazi.”¹²² The following day, the *Volksbote* publicized a telegram Upper Silesia’s free and Christian unions had sent to the Prussian minister of the interior in the face of disquiet in the immediate border region, pleading for the territorial expansion of the police president of Gleiwitz’s jurisdiction and for the increase of the forces under his command. “Since particularly in the border districts insurgents have on a larger scale entered the SA. and the National Socialist party leadership has lost all control during the movement’s unnaturally rabid swelling,” the unions explained their request, “there is the danger that more cases of terror will be organized by it [the SA], which would also one day encroach on minority members. Our German compatriots beyond the borders would have to bear the consequences.”¹²³ The

¹²¹ “daß es in der Nationalsozialistischen Partei einen ebenso großen Prozentsatz Insurgenten-Polen gibt wie in der kommunistischen Partei”; “Der Renegat - Verteidiger forderte die Freisprechung der Mörder-Hitlerianer, weil sie nur - einen Polen ermordet haben,” *Nowiny Codzienne*, August 25, 1932. APO, NPO, 1025.

¹²² “Interessant ist, daß Donner jene merkwürdige politische Entwicklung durchgemacht hat, wie viele von der nationalen Elite aus der braunen Armee. Donner war anfangs Insurgent, dann Kommunist und jetzt Nazi.”; “Nazibanditen überfallen Landarbeiter bei der Arbeit,” *Oberschlesischer Volksbote*, August 5, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

¹²³ “Da gerade in den Grenzbezirken Insurgenten in größerem Umfange in der SA. Eingang gefunden haben und die nationalsozialistische Parteileitung bei dem unnatürlichen rabiaten Anschwellen der Bewegung jede Kontrolle verloren hat, besteht die Gefahr, daß von dieser weitere Terrorfälle organisiert werden, die auch eines Tages auf Minderheitsangehörige übergreifen würden. Die Folgen müßten unsere deutschen

Nowiny Codziennie concurred that the SA consisted in large part of “already Germanized youths,” “in national regards unsteady youths,” and out-and-out Polish youths, whose parents had not taken enough care.¹²⁴

More than in the case of the SA gang’s murder of Konrad Pietrzuch, however, it was in the Schiwy case that rejection and mockery of Nazism’s unenforced ethnonationalism formed the mainstay of the opposition’s response. In its initial coverage of the trial and verdict, the *Volksblatt* defended Schiwy’s Germandom by scoffing that, “Commissar Schiwy could take on a competition in the German language with Mr. Braun [Münchmeyer’s attorney] without danger.”¹²⁵ The following week a longer piece, dedicated entirely to the nationality issue as raised at the trial, titled “The German-blooded Nazis in Upper Silesia,” appeared in the *Volksblatt*. Münchmeyer’s contempt for Schiwy’s pronunciation and for his promotion from uncivilized Upper Silesia to a job in West Germany had, the paper argued, exposed the Nazi notable’s disrespect, “despite all nationalist talk,” for Upper Silesians and their Germandom.¹²⁶ Despite their hard pronunciation and Slavic last names, the *Volksblatt* affirmed, Upper Silesians were cultivated and loyal Germans, which they had proven during the war and the plebiscite period when they had risked life, limb, and home to fight, campaign, and vote for Germany. Doubting their Germandom was to disrespect these intrepid demonstrations of German disposition. In the face of such disdainful statements by Münchmeyer and other quoted Nazis, one might expect, the *Volksblatt* fumed, that “the National Socialists put great value on German-bloodedness and at least among their standard bearers and leaders

Volksgenossen jenseits der Grenze tragen.”; “Oberschlesischer Notruf,” *Oberschlesischer Volksbote*, August 6, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

¹²⁴ “bereits germanisierte Jugendliche,” “in nationaler Beziehung wankelmütige Jugendliche”; “Die Seuche des Hitlertums im Lande der Piasten,” *Nowiny Codziennie*, May 14, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

¹²⁵ “Einen Wettbewerb der deutschen Sprache hätte Kommissar Schwimm mit Herrn Braun ohne Gefahr aufnehmen können.”; “Narbenforscher Münchmeyer freigesprochen,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, November 11, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

¹²⁶ “trotz allen nationalen Geredes”; “Die deutschblutigen Nazis in Oberschlesien,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, November 24, 1931. APO, NPO, 1025.

would not tolerate any men ‘with hard pronunciation’ and Slavic names.”¹²⁷ And yet, whom did the latest issue of the regional party newspaper announce as upcoming speakers? “A bunch of ‘Teutons’, descendants of the Vandals and Silingi who once settled in Upper Silesia, men of tall stature, blue eyes and flaxen hair, and with names, whose relatedness to Gothic linguistic roots everyone notices immediately: Adamczyk, Ciomperlik, Harupka, Janitzek, Kowohl, Motzny, Morcinek, Slawik, Sukowski, Swatzina. And who commends himself to the citizens of the Third Reich as a party comrade or sympathizer? Ciensky, Dokupil, A. Foltis and C. Gruschka, Harnys, Idzinski, Kruppa, Maly (like Hitler’s mother), Plusczyk, Robaschik, Sliwka (...), Soika, Zajonc. Hopefully Mr. Münchmeyer won’t break his tongue, so precious for the party, when he has to pronounce the names.”¹²⁸ The *Volksblatt* thus in a snidely humorous manner lambasted Münchmeyer and his fellow Nazis for directing against their opponents an ethnonationalist rhetoric that did not reflect borderlands reality and that their own movement failed to live up to. The *Vorwärts* made similar effort to expose Nazism’s hypocrisy in 1932 by publishing a list of Nazi candidates for the Prussian Diet who bore Slavic names.¹²⁹ Although the NSDAP’s national leadership denied that those were in fact names of its candidates, according to the *Cech* comparisons with the official candidate lists bore out the allegations of the *Vorwärts*.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ “...daß die Nationalsozialisten den größten Wert auf Deutschblütigkeit legten und zumindestens unter ihren Vorkämpfern und Führern keine Männer ‘mit harter Aussprache’ und slawischen Namen dulden würden”; Ibid.

¹²⁸ “Lauter ‘Germanen’, Nachkommen der einst in Oberschlesien siedelnden Vandalen und Silinger, Männer von hohem Wuchs, blauen Augen und flachsfarbenem Haarschopf, und mit Namen, deren sprachliche Verwandtschaft mit gotischen Sprachwurzeln jedem sofort auffällt: Adamczyk, Ciomperlik, Harupka, Janitzek, Kowohl, Motzny, Morcinek, Slawik, Sukowski, Swatzina. Und wer empfiehlt sich als Parteigenosse oder Sympathisierender den Bürgern des Dritten Reichs? Ciensky, Dokupil, A. Foltis und C. Gruschka, Harnys, Idzinski, Kruppa, Maly (wie Hitlers Mutter), Plusczyk, Robaschik, Sliwka (wenn der die Nazis nicht verpflaumt!), Soka, Zajonc. Hoffentlich zerbricht sich Herr Münchmeyer nicht seine für die Partei so kostbare Zunge, wenn er die Namen aussprechen muß.”; Ibid.

¹²⁹ “Nazi-Lügner in der Zange,” *Cech*, July/August 1932. SBB.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Its critics were right that the Nazi movement did not practice the ethnonationalism it preached, a circumstance it even very occasionally explicitly acknowledged. Recruitment to the NSDAP thus indeed did not exclude those with Polish surnames. One expansive submission to Abel's essay contest, for instance, came from a G. Goretzki, whose Catholic parents from Katowice both had Polish last names.¹³¹ Several of those charged in connection with the anti-Polish 1929 Oppeln theatre riot likewise bore Slavic surnames, as the *Nowiny Codzienne* pointed out.¹³² Upper Silesia's party paper even ran a regular column aimed at members from Polish-speaking backgrounds, titled "Pierrona Fransek speaks."¹³³ Many of these Nazi activists with names that hardly smacked of racial purity eventually changed them. A recent history of what was then Lyck, for example, mentions that "Masurian surnames were not missing in that party – Czygan, Turowski, Olscheswski, Kulesza, Olech, Lissek, and others," adding that from 1938 on, when a decree mandated the Germanization of the designations of villages and localities, these functionaries exchanged their names for more palatable ones.¹³⁴ In fact, Upper Silesia's *Untergauleiter* himself, Josef Adamczyk changed his Slavic name in 1939 to the more German-sounding Adams.¹³⁵

Due to their ethnic backgrounds, many Nazis also spoke non-German languages. Several Masurian respondents to Theodore Abel's essay contest, for instance, wrote in grammatically and orthographically faulty German that potentially hints at a different first language.¹³⁶ Masurians' use of Polish, even in NSDAP meetings, persisted, to the

¹³¹ G. Goretzki, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58483/g-span-classqueryhlgoretzkispan?ctx=6415e05e-16d2-4293-9957-1da6294c93cd&idx=0>.

¹³² "Die Oppelner Vorfälle vor Gericht.," *Nowiny Codzienne*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹³³ Bolko Janus, *Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918-1933* (PhD diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1995), 81.

¹³⁴ "A mazurskich nazwisk w tej Partii nie brakowało - Czygan, Turowski, Olscheswski, Kulesza, Olech, Lissek i inne.," Michał Olszewski and Rafał Żytyniec, *Elk – spacerownik po niezwykłym mieście* (Elk: Muzeum Historyczne w Elku, 2014), 291.

¹³⁵ *Statisten in Uniform: Die Mitglieder des Reichstags 1933-1945*, eds. Joachim Lilla, Martin Döring, and Andreas Schulz (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2004), 3.

¹³⁶ Frau Nieke, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58403/span-classqueryhlfrauspan-span-classqueryhlniek?ctx=7122c717-4810-4391-9426-1e17adf1b825&idx=0>;

party's frustration, throughout the Third Reich's reign, as Andreas Kossert has demonstrated.¹³⁷ In Schleswig, an activist touring the region putting on film screenings observed about local audiences' speech: "Their language sounds strange and incomprehensible to us, when they converse with one another, mostly they speak Frisian or Low Danish, but – National Socialists they are one and all, young and old..."¹³⁸ Even during anti-Polish attacks Nazis occasionally employed Polish. Konrad Pietrzuch's brother Alfons testified that, "In the Polish language one of the two intruders then said: 'Away, you damned *donnerwetterischen* Communists.'" ¹³⁹ When Nazi regulars of a hotel inn in Ortelsburg tried to violently expel supposedly Polish guests, who actually turned out to be a Czechoslovak university group, the Nazi ringleader's initial verbal altercation with them was similarly conducted in Polish.¹⁴⁰ German nationality, denied in opponents yet granted to party members of different ethnic backgrounds, was effectively made a matter of political convictions. This usurpation of the Polish-speaking milieu by Nazism was lamented by the *Cech*.¹⁴¹ The journals of Upper Silesia's Polish minority, for their part, attributed the Polish party's ever-diminishing election returns to this participation of youths from Polish-speaking backgrounds in Nazi activism and even in anti-Polish terroristic gangs.¹⁴²

The admission of ethnic non-Germans to the Nazi movement must be considered a matter largely of pragmatism, but very occasionally Nazis did explicitly express

Walter Szimba, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58735/span-classqueryhlwalterspan-span-classqueryhlsz?ctx=0416bc77-eb8d-4cc2-95a5-84dd79904157&idx=0>.

¹³⁷ Andreas Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?: die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 235-243.

¹³⁸ "Fremd und unverständlich klingt uns ihre Sprache, wenn sie sich miteinander unterhalten, zumeist sprechen sie friesisch oder plattdänisch, aber - Nationalsozialisten sind sie alle, jung und alt..."; "Auf Filmfahrt an der Grenze," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, July 3, 1932. KSI.

¹³⁹ "In polnischer Sprache sagte dann noch der eine von den zwei Eindringenen: 'Raus, ihr verfluchten donnerwetterischen Kommunisten.'"; Article. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Verdict in the case against Werner Schulz and Gottfried Heyer, June 5, 1931, p. 2. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

¹⁴¹ "Zurück zu Gott," *Cech*, November/December 1931. SBB.

¹⁴² "polnischer Herkunft"; "Die Seuche des Hitlertums im Lande der Piasten," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 14, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

flexibility regarding the basis of Germandom, principally in the context of aspirations to win people and hence territory for Germany. Like most accounts of the plebiscites, Nazis' stressed that these referendums had taken place at a time when Germany was in no position to promise prosperity, while Denmark and Poland respectively allegedly did so liberally. Wilhelm N.N., long-time leader of Flensburg's Hitler Youth, thus recalled how he and his friends had, as teenage plebiscite activists, pasted strips of paper reading "And you believe that?" over Danish posters pledging affluence for Schleswig in a Danish state.¹⁴³ By taking these posters sufficiently seriously to feel a need to counteract them, activists like Wilhelm tacitly acknowledged that the plebiscites were not simple censuses of unalterable, ethnically-rooted national identity. Deplored when it came to the original plebiscites, this persistent national fluidity, amenable to being swayed by circumstances, was also seen as potential route to the reversal of the territorial losses they had engendered. After all, the *Flensburger NS-Zeitung* contended in 1932, "Truly not infrequently one hears people, who cast their vote for Denmark [in 1920] in good faith and out of honest disposition, curse that day, which brought them bondage instead of freedom and robbed them of hope for future happiness."¹⁴⁴ The answer, the paper suggested, was to hold a fresh plebiscite in all of Schleswig, including the region's now-Danish part. This vote, the *NS-Zeitung* was confident, "would turn out differently than twelve years ago, it will be an overwhelming commitment to the German motherland."¹⁴⁵ Only Nazism's rise could guarantee that such a second plebiscite would transpire: "And that this new plebiscite comes quite soon, for that vouches the greatest German people's movement in history, the German National Socialism, for that vouches the leadership

¹⁴³ "Und dat glöwst Du?"; Peter Heinacher, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP im Stadt- und Landkreis Flensburg* (Flensburg: Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte, 1986), 244-246.

¹⁴⁴ "Wahrlich, nicht vereinzelt hört man heute Leute, die in gutem Glauben und aus ehrlicher Gesinnung ihre Stimme für Dänemark abgaben diesen Tag verfluchen, der ihnen statt Freiheit Knechtschaft brachte und noch dazu die Hoffnung auf einstiges Glück nahm."; "Entrissenes deutsches Land muß wieder deutsch werden! Nordschleswigs Schicksal," *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, August 20, 1932. SHLB.

¹⁴⁵ "Diese Abstimmung wird heute anders ausfallen, als vor 12 Jahren, sie wird ein überwältigendes Bekenntnis zum deutschen Mutterland sein.;" Ibid.

personality of one Adolf Hitler.”¹⁴⁶ Until then, North Schleswig’s Germans, the paper urged, had to resist being taken in by “Danish slogans.”¹⁴⁷ Similar revisionist hopes were conveyed to the Upper Silesian *Untergau* two weeks after Hitler’s accession to the chancellorship by a letter-writer from Polish Upper Silesia. Writing in faulty, sometimes incoherent German he averred that “these days even most Polish-disposed Upper Silesians welcome the Hitler government” and hoped for the border’s speedy revision.¹⁴⁸ Many who had once identified as Polish, he asserted, were now disillusioned with the Polish administration’s corruption and cronyism and therefore “Germany today has the best patriots in former idealistic Poles.”¹⁴⁹ In order to diminish Poland’s appeal for Germany’s minorities and to facilitate the country’s fight against the Versailles Treaty in the international arena, the letter-writer recommended the new Nazi government engage one such convert to address Germany’s Polish-speaking minorities and the League of Nations. Back in Schleswig-Holstein, Nazism’s supposed greater capacity for exploiting national indifference in the service of the irredentist cause was used against the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* during Nazis’ 1932 campaign to take it over. In the run-up to the annual convention of the *Bund* that year, the Nazi *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* ran an article that voiced satisfaction that the meeting’s published agenda indicated that its main subject would be North Schleswig, rather than the various political reforms that had in recent years too often preoccupied the *Bund*. To make this renewed focus on North Schleswig and its German population efficacious, the *Tageszeitung* counseled, the *Bund* would have to agitate among Schleswig-Holstein’s population “from morning to night.”¹⁵⁰ It would be necessary to travel the region, advertise, found

¹⁴⁶ “Und daß dieser neue Abstimmungstag recht bald kommt, dafür bürgt die größte deutsche Volksbewegung in der Geschichte, der deutsche Nationalsozialismus, dafür bürgt die Führerpersönlichkeit eines Adolf Hitler.”; Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “dänische Parolen”; Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “heute die meisten auch pol. gesinnten Oberschlesier die Regierung Hitler begrüßen”; Letter to Adamczyk, February 14, 1933. APK, 147/228.

¹⁴⁹ “in den früheren idealen Polen hat heute Deutschland die besten Patrioten”; Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ “von morgens bis abends”; “Gedanken zur Tagung der Landesversammlung des Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bundes,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, August 25, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417 Nr. 91.

branches, and assign specific tasks to those chapters. If indeed “every place were assigned its task it should be possible to win for Germandom many a renegade, many a lukewarm person, many an unenlightened one up there.”¹⁵¹ Young teachers working in North Schleswig had relayed that, “Because 25 percent committed Danes live in North Schleswig, another 25 percent are committed either tepidly and spiritlessly or strongly and consciously to Germandom, the last 50 percent can be won for Germandom.”¹⁵² Effectual agitation could, however, only occur if the current, inert leadership of the *Bund* resigned and an activist, Nazi team was brought on board, it was argued. National indifference, all in all, presented an opportunity for irredentists and one that the Nazi movement claimed it was best equipped to seize.

Sometimes ambiguous national circumstances were portrayed as neutral or even positive realities without being so directly linked to the possibility of renewed plebiscites. The *Schleswigsche Nachrichten* routinely railed against those who, for purely material reasons it was assumed, embraced a Danish identity, but in one report on this so-called *Speckdänentum* also conceded that in a borderland genuine national indifference was inevitable. “A sharp national dividing line” could never be drawn, the paper argued, and a “more or less movable dividing area, in which both nations live with and next to one another, often even in the same family” would therefore always persist.¹⁵³ Unlike national fickleness motivated by materialism, this inevitable grey zone posed no inherent threat. The *Flensburger NS-Zeitung* similarly in the summer of 1932 countered recent remarks by Danish nationalist leader H.P. Hansen defending Denmark’s right to North

¹⁵¹ “Wenn jedem Ort seine Aufgabe zugewiesen würde, müßte es möglich sein, dort oben manchen Abtrünnigen, manchen Lauen, manchen Unaufgeklärten für das Deutschtum zu gewinnen”; Ibid.

¹⁵² “Es gibt viele in Nordschleswig tätige Junglehrer, die sagen: ‘Da 25 Prozent Stockdänen in Nordschleswig wohnen, andere 25 Prozent sich lau und flau oder stark und bewußt zum Deutschtum bekennen, so sind die letzten 50 Prozent für das Deutschtum noch zu gewinnen’.”; Ibid.

¹⁵³ “Eine scharfe nationale Grenzlinie kann und wird es nie geben, sondern stets nur eine mehr oder minder verschiebbare Grenzfläche, in der beide Nationen mit und neben einander wohnen, oft sogar innerhalb derselben Familie.”; “Grenzpolitische Wochenschau,” *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, December 31, 1932. SHLB.

Schleswig by pointing to the region's "mixed population of Germans and Jutes."¹⁵⁴ North Schleswig was thus hardly "Danish through and through."¹⁵⁵ Nor was it by this description unequivocally German, however. Rather, it was precisely the region's ethnic ambiguity that allowed German irredentists to challenge the hold of other nations on contested regions and to push Germanism deeper into the grey zone.

These interactions in Germany's Weimar-era borderlands between Nazism's irredentism and racial ideology on the one hand and the reality of ethnic and national ambiguity on the other has as yet gone unexamined, even in the flourishing literature on national indifference. Yet they illustrate that Nazis on the frontiers were already engaging in a nationalist doublethink of sorts: Nazi activists maintained that there existed an unalterable identity between ethnicities and nations and, simultaneously, that people could be won for Germanism. Both sides of this coin played, at different times, to Nazism's advantage during the period of its ascendancy. Rhetoric that painted the borderlands as the sites of clashes between clearly delineated nations, by far the more common, could be employed to indict opponents on ethnic and national in addition to on political grounds. Then again, recognizing national indifference could provide a foundation for irredentism. Pragmatically, of course, the Nazi movement could not afford in any case to be too selective regarding its members' ethnic backgrounds. The contrast between these two ways of thinking opened up the Nazi movement to charges of hypocrisy, both for not adhering to its own ethnonationalist principles and for continuing to expound them in the face of that failure. Infamous as Nazi racial ideology rightfully is, evaluating its interplay with borderland realities can thus productively nuance understandings of it and its centrality to the Nazi worldview, illuminating its indeed

¹⁵⁴ "aus Deutschen und Jüten gemischten Bevölkerung"; "Also sprach H.P. Hansen," *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, July 16, 1932. SHLB.

¹⁵⁵ "urdänischer"; *Ibid.*

“fragmentary, instrumental” nature.¹⁵⁶ The connection of nationalities’ mixing and ambiguity with political violence will be surveyed in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁶ Pendas, Roseman, and Wetzell, “Introduction,” 7.

The Borderlands' Violent Contestation

Nazi activists in Germany's border provinces were, as the previous chapter has established, very much aware of the ethnic ambiguity and national indifference that continued to characterize these regions. One response to the knowledge that Germandom enjoyed no certain monopoly on the national loyalties of these areas' populations and Germany hence, by the precedent of the post-war settlement, no guaranteed hold on the land was violence. Violence – or in this case prospective violence – could on the one hand take regimented form, as it did in border protection initiatives. Many Nazis volunteered in the *Reichswehr*-sponsored *Grenzschutz*, though the leadership remained wary of collaboration with other groups in military matters. Instead, it occasionally promoted the movement and the SA in particular as the more effective underwriter of border defense. On the other hand, the borderlands also saw more spontaneous ethnic violence, generally in reaction to Polish activism. Such clashes occurred particularly during election seasons but also outside them, for Nazis wished to suppress competing visions of their home regions' national status. Others have stressed that violence perpetrated by Nazis in these regions was often exaggerated by nationalist media on both sides and in fact even claimed as nationalist when it was in actuality of the quotidian variety, drawing on government reports as apparently objective evidence of borderlands violence differing little from the political and day-to-day violence elsewhere. The government in its difficult foreign political situation, however, had its own motivations for contesting claims of nationalist violence where it could. While it may thus be hard to tell in hindsight which reported violent incidents were in fact motivated by nationalism, the overall pattern suggests that Nazis often responded violently when they felt that the aspirational monolithic Germandom of the borderlands was being encroached on.

Conflict, it should be noted, is absolutely central to politics. It fashions and continually reinforces groups, defines their roles in relation to one another, and by these

means upholds the overarching social system.¹ Where group identities need creating or imbuing with renewed relevance, conflict will even be deliberately provoked or stoked.² The German borderlands were such a case where national groups were perceived by nationalists to require fortifying. The incompleteness of the nationalization process might therefore, in this framework, give rise to an expectation of finding a higher, rather than a lesser, rate of violence than in more fully nationalized regions. Tim Wilson has made this case in his comparative study of the immediate post-World War I years in Ireland and Upper Silesia. Violence in the latter was both more frequent and more gruesome, precisely because national groups still had to be generated there and the consequences of choosing what was perceived as the wrong one demonstrated.³ Violence might thus be thought of as one radical means by which categories of people with a shared trait can have higher levels of group-ness instilled in them. Less murderously than during Upper Silesia's plebiscite period, this dynamic of fostering group-ness through violence arguably continued into the period under investigation here. Furthermore, political scientists Roger Petersen has found in a comparative study that resentment at a perceived inversion of an ethnic hierarchy is, much more so than other potential triggers like fear, the best predictor for ethnic animosities turning violent.⁴ Such a turning upside down of the national hierarchy was certainly considered by Germans to have occurred in the wake of the Versailles Treaty and, what was more, it was feared that this reversal might intensify, for Poland was widely feared to plan to claim or annex more territory yet. Violence was arguably deemed an apt tool for putting the upstart nationality in what was held to be its rightful place as well as for buttressing national groups.

¹ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1956), 34.

² Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1988): 433; Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, 104-105.

³ Timothy Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 111-115.

⁴ Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51-52.

The lack of a perceived inversion of hierarchies may explain why nationalist violence did not plague Schleswig during the Weimar years, despite all resentment of North Schleswig's loss and hostility toward the Danes. Of course, Schleswig saw its fair share of political violence during the republic's final years. Some members of the militant *Landvolk* movement, which originated and had its epicenter there, committed bomb attacks against *Landrat* and tax offices.⁵ The Altona Bloody Sunday of July 17, 1932, during which clash between SA men, Communists, and the police eighteen people died, became the pretext for the replacement by presidential edict three days later of the Prussian government with chancellor Franz von Papen, who was named *Reich* commissar for the state.⁶ Neither these two episodes of violence, nor any others, had ethnic undertones, however. In fact, the nationality struggle in the north, while intense, had always lacked the ferocity of that in the East. Long before scientific racism took hold, Prussia's Polish-speaking populations were regarded as of lower civilizational status than their German countrymen. Frederick the Great justified partitioning Poland in the first place by citing the incompetence of its rulers, the most prominent example of Poles' ostensible inability to manage affairs of any sort effectively.⁷ Masurians, for their part, were considered brutish to the point of outlandishness.⁸ Race eventually became yet another way for Germans to assert superiority. Such claims were less viable to make about Denmark, which could hardly be claimed to be less developed than Germany and whose population was if anything above the German one in the racial hierarchy. Their Nordic nature Danes were, it is true, accused of having fallen out of touch with due to

⁵ Uwe Danker and Utz Schliesky, *Schleswig-Holstein 1800 bis heute: Eine historische Landeskunde* (Husum: Husum Druck- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014), 212-221.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 226-227.

⁷ William Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 36-37.

⁸ Andreas Kossert, *Preussen, Deutsche oder Polen?: die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 34; Richard Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans? Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 43-44.

their internationalism.⁹ This detachment from their racial-national background meant, Nazis argued, that Germans were currently the better custodians of Danish heritage. In Germany in contrast to in Denmark, for instance, the *Volkshochschule*, a format originally conceived by the Danish pastor-educator N.F.S. Grundtvig, thrived, for Germans understood better Grundtvig's putative principle of improving one's own nation first in order to better the world.¹⁰ Once Danes reconnected with this sort of Nordic spirit, it was insisted, they would recognize Nazism's truth.¹¹ However much Denmark's annexation of North Schleswig was resented, it would thus not have been considered an upsetting of the racial order. Denmark was, furthermore, also a smaller state and a lesser geopolitical threat than Poland. Invasion or renewed claims for more German territory by Poland, but not by Denmark, were anticipated and feared. Denmark might thus not have appeared to pose a threat that necessitated heading off by radical measures.

In the Eastern borderlands, in contrast, violence – or at least reporting thereof – was a staple of the run-up to elections, particularly to those to the *Reichstag* in September 1930 and July 1932 and to the Prussian Diet in April of the latter year. Usually this violence was fairly quotidian, consisting of the taunting, threatening, and beating of Polish campaigners as well as of the seizure and destruction of their campaign materials. Thereby, perpetrators sought to reinforce who, in their view, in these contested regions was a legitimate member of the body politic with a right to political participation and who, crucially, was not. Upper Silesia, with its active Polish movement and good archival record, offers the greatest number of documented examples. In that province's Ratibor county on a spring day in 1932, for instance, a group of Polish campaigners repeatedly ran into a band of hostile Nazis, who over the course of these encounters thrashed some

⁹ "Dänemark und der deutsche Nationalsozialismus," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 28, 1932. KSI; "Etwas vom dänischen Volkscharakter," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, July 17, 1932. KSI.

¹⁰ "Etwas vom dänischen Volkscharakter," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, July 17, 1932. KSI.

¹¹ "Dänemark und der deutsche Nationalsozialismus," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 28, 1932. KSI.

of them, threw stones at their leader, and under threat of beating extracted their propaganda materials from two of them.¹² Also in the lead-up to the 1932 Diet election, two Polish campaigners were beaten – one of them with a rock – and stoned by a group of Nazis when they were distributing flyers near a village polling station in Rosenberg county.¹³ In a separate incident in the same district, a band of ten Nazis hurled stones at two Polish activists who consequently had to abandon the village before they could hand out their flyers.¹⁴ Often, campaign materials were destroyed outright. Before the Diet election, for instance, a group of Polish campaigners cycled through a Ratibor county village, two of them sporting posters showing the Polish party's lead candidates on their torso and back. When they encountered a notorious local Nazi, he, aided by a mob of his political comrades, attacked them and tore the posters off them.¹⁵ The same article also touched on another incident, which had occurred near Gleiwitz, during which a Polish campaigner had been encircled by a gang of Nazis and had had his fliers destroyed.¹⁶ A week and a half later another piece told how a lone Polish campaigner in a Cosel county village had stood near the village church with a Polish party poster when a twenty-strong crowd gathered around him. One of the mob stuck a Hitler handbill on the Polish sign. Then two men, one of whom first tore up the poster altogether, set about beating the Pole, with three further individuals throwing stones at the Polish poster all the while.¹⁷ Near Oppeln, another solitary Pole similarly experienced a series of antagonistic encounters during a day of campaigning for the Diet election. The day began with a quarrel over the putting up of a Polish poster. Then he stationed himself outside the church to pass out flyers but exiting Nazi congregants tore up many of them and beat him. When he took up

¹² "Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 10, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 20, 1932. APO, RO 1882.

¹³ "Terror vor der Wahl" (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, April 29, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 10, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 20, 1932. APO, RO 1882.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "Nochmals vom Wahlterror," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 29, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, June 4, 1932. APO, RO 1882.

position elsewhere to distribute the remaining leaflets, the same Nazis attacked him a second time. Finally, he happened upon some youths tearing down the initially contested poster and, when he warned them against doing so, was threatened with a knife.¹⁸

Perhaps the most extensively recorded single incident, however, took place in the county town of Cosel in the lead-up to the 1930 *Reichstag* election. There, the *Polska Zachodnia* reported, the Polish campaigner Klinik had been peacefully passing out leaflets in the main square during the weekend market when Nazi “shock troops” attacked him.¹⁹ The police, however, allegedly intervened only when a group of Communists rushed to Klinik’s aid and the situation developed into a more general brawl. Even then, the police made no arrests, though the Nazis reputedly threatened to incinerate Polish homes.²⁰

Polish election rallies were another favorite target of violence. In a village in Rosenberg county, for example, young men, most of them members of the Hitler Youth, gathered outside the pub where a Polish campaign event for the 1932 Diet election was about to be held. Arguing that Poles “belonged behind the border,”²¹ they threatened to break up the gathering and once the speech was underway duly began howling like a “horde of savages.”²² The meeting was consequently abandoned after half an hour. Following another Polish rally in the same county during that time, the speaker’s car on its way back drove over a plank with nails sticking out of it, purportedly placed there by Nazis.²³ Only because it was being driven at low speed, the *Nowiny Codzienne* maintained, could the car and its occupants avoid veering into a ditch or tree.²⁴ In East

¹⁸ “Wahlterror im Opperler Schlesien” (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 5, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

¹⁹ “Stosstruppler”; “Ein schändlicher preussischer Terror gegenüber den Polen im Opperler Schlesien. Die Stosstruppler und Polizeibeamten, die Schinder des polnischen Volkes” (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, October 13, 1930. APO, NPO, 109.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “...sie gehörten hinter die Grenze”; “Noch Fälle von Wahlterror” (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 22, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

²² “eine Horde von Wilden”; Ibid.

²³ „Unter dem preußischen Stiefel. Ein barbarischer Anschlag der Hitlerleute auf ein Automobil mit polnischen Referenten.“ (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, April 17, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

²⁴ “Eine Falle auf die polnischen Funktionäre” (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, April 17, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

Prussian Allenstein, meanwhile, the evening preceding the July 1932 *Reichstag* election saw the storming of the Polish club house, where 200 Polish youths had congregated, by armed Nazis.²⁵ Most notably, though, violence broke out in September 1930 in Pomeranian Bütow county when pastor Domanski was slated to speak there. By the time Domanski arrived, the meeting hall was already full of a hundred-strong throng of Nazis under the leadership of the Protestant pastor Becker, who demanded that Domanski deliver his address in German. If Domanski did insist on speaking in Polish, the policemen present declared, they could not guarantee the safety of the meeting, though after Polish objections they had backed away from their initial outright support for Becker's request. They further refused to call in reinforcements. To Domanski's admonitions that breaking up the election meeting would constitute an infringement of Poles' constitutional right to equal treatment, the Nazis responded that they would not tolerate a Polish-language speech regardless. All the while, members of the crowd roared things like "Get out to Poland."²⁶ Finally, the owner of the hall withdrew her permission of the meeting and it disbanded. As the participants dispersed, the Nazis, under the cover of darkness, reportedly perpetrated a veritable "pogrom," savagely beating many attendees.²⁷ Even pastor Becker, mistaken for a Pole in the dark, was pounded by his men.

One particularly well-documented case of electoral violence, which illustrates such clashes' aim of enforcing Germanism in contested regions, occurred in the Masurian county town of Ortelsburg a month prior to the 1930 *Reichstag* election. On the morning of August 23, the inhabitants had awoken to find Polish party flyers distributed

²⁵ "Überfall der Hitlerleute auf das polnische Vereinshaus in Allenstein," *Kurier Poznanski*, August 2, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 10, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

²⁶ "'raus nach Polen'"; "Skandalöse Vorgänge in Oslawdamerow und Damsdorf. Hakatistische Banden überfallen die Polen. – Asiatische Zustände im Kreise Bütow. – Wir verlangen die Entfernung des Regierungspräsidenten in Köslin und des Landrats in Bütow," *Głos Pogranicza*, September 17, 1930, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 24, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

²⁷ "Pogrom"; Ibid.

throughout their downtown.²⁸ Since they had been seen in the company of a well-known local Polish activist, a visiting group of students were suspected of responsibility for this. Accounts of the ensuing events differ, but the verdict when they came to trial concluded that when three Nazis – Werner Schulz, Gottfried Heyer, and Gustav Trzaskia – returned to Ortelsburg from an election rally in a nearby village that evening, they stopped by an inn, where they heard that the foreign party was rumored to be staying at Julius Wrobel’s Central Hotel.²⁹ That establishment’s taproom was incidentally the local Nazi hang-out, to which they had in any case been planning to head. Once there, they questioned Wrobel about the rumored presence of Poles among his guests, but he denied it. They stayed in the taproom, where accusations that the students were lodging in the hotel continued to circulate. Eventually therefore, Trzaska and Chittka demanded to see the guestbook, a request that Wrobel refused. Wrobel then left the hotel’s public area to give tempers a chance to cool, while Chittka phoned the police, so that someone might be sent to check out the guests’ nationality. Presently, the local Polish activist, in whose presence the visiting group had earlier been seen, turned up at the hotel and the headwaiter, mistaking him for one of the visitors, led him up to the guestrooms to the great agitation of the patrons.³⁰ At this point, Wrobel, having returned to the lobby, admitted that his guests were indeed foreign; whether they were Polish Schulz, who had emerged as the Nazis’ ringleader, could go and ascertain himself. Schulz immediately went upstairs. The young man on whose door he knocked first informed Schulz that he and the rest of his group were not Polish but Czechoslovak and produced a corresponding passport when Schulz demanded proof. In the meantime, two unidentified Nazis had followed Schulz upstairs and more students had emerged from their rooms. An altercation between what was by then something of a crowd developed in the corridor, during which one of the Nazis

²⁸ Verdict in the case against Werner Schulz and Gottfried Heyer, June 5, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

²⁹ Statements in the case against Werner Schulz and Gottfried Heyer. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b; "Bericht: über den Überfall auf den Studentenausflug in Ortelsburg." GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

³⁰ "wegen seines typisch fremdländischen Aussehens"; Ibid.

slapped a Czechoslovak visitor and Schulz threatened, “You have to leave within ten minutes!”³¹ Much of this heated exchange was conducted, even on the part of the Nazis, in Polish. One of the students rang for the headwaiter, who rebuked Schulz and headed downstairs to call for the police, just to find that the policeman for whom the Nazis had earlier called had arrived. Still under the impression that he was there simply to check the visitors’ passports, the officer did not take the Nazi rowdies’ names and later remembered only Schulz, who had stayed for a time while he inspected the guests’ documents. On his way out, the policeman finally dispersed a twenty-strong crowd that had gathered outside the hotel, shouting “Poles out’ and the like.”³² The Czechoslovak group departed the following day. Having been thought Polish and involved in Polish electoral propaganda, they had fallen victim to Nazis’ drive to demarcate whose participation in political life and, in fact, mere presence was in their view permissible in the region.

It is worth noting that the perpetrators and victims in many of these hostile encounters knew one another. While the Czechoslovak students were visitors unknown to their attackers, the local activist with whom they were supposed to be in league was clearly a figure of whom the Nazis were aware. Similarly, in newspaper reports about other instances of violence the leaders of Polish campaigners’ assailants were usually listed by name. One compendium of electoral violence published in the *Nowiny Codzienne* in May 1932, for instance, reported on eight separate incidents and gave names in every case.³³ Among the episodes chronicled in that compilation were that of the repeatedly stoned and beaten campaigners in Ratibor county, that of the cyclists who had had the posters of the Polish candidates that they had been wearing torn off them, and that of the activists who had been encircled and had their flyers destroyed near Gleiwitz.

³¹ “In zehn Minuten müsst ihr raus!”; Verdict in the case against Werner Schulz and Gottfried Heyer, June 5, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

³² “Polen raus’ und ähnliches”; Ibid.

³³ “Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien,” *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 10, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 20, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

The articles about the lone Polish campaigners who had been assaulted near Cosel³⁴ and Oppeln respectively both provided names as well.³⁵ Pastor Becker, of course, featured prominently in reporting on the disruption of the Bütow county rally with pastor Domanski. Perpetrators' names, as a rule, do not appear to have been freely invented by the Polish press, for when German authorities investigated, they could usually find and bring in for interviewing those named in the newspaper pieces. Certainly, as Mathias Niendorf has highlighted in the context of the Border Province, both sides' nationalist activists often came to and caused trouble in villages whose inhabitants ordinarily coexisted peacefully.³⁶ In fact, many of the Polish campaigners mentioned above were visiting from elsewhere to promote their cause. That Poles often accused people known to them of violence, however, suggests at least that assaults occurred within networks of nationalist activists that were aware of one another. Often, Nazis were thus not assailing strangers, but members of their own or nearby communities.

While those accused by name of having perpetrated attacks appear generally to have been real people, to what extent confrontations were genuinely motivated by nationalist politics was and is debated. After all, the Polish press, from which all above examples except that of the disturbance in the Ortelsburg hotel are taken, had a vested interest in heightening the population's perception of nationalist division and strife. In frontier regions like Upper Silesia and Masuria, where nationalist loyalties had not yet become firm, activists first needed to implant the nationalist view of the world as split into mutually exclusive, often antagonistic nations. It was owed to this need, Pieter Judson has argued in his book about the imperial Austrian language frontier, that accounts of violence proliferated – it was not so much violence itself that was endemic as propagandistic press portrayals thereof. Accounts of violence became such a staple of

³⁴ “Nochmals vom Wahlterror,” *Nowiny Codzienne/Dziennik Berlinski*, May 29, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, June 4, 1932. APO, RO 1882.

³⁵ “Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien” (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne* May 5, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

³⁶ Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze: Deutsche und Polen in den Kreisen Faltow (Złotów) und Zempelburg (Sępólno Krajeńskie) 1900-1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 336.

nationalist reporting that they could become quite schematic, he explained, such as the genre of what he calls the schoolhouse drama, in which acts of vandalism against nationalist private school associations' schoolhouses were characterized as expressions of deep-seated nationalist animosities in the respective affected village.³⁷ If narratives like these are taken at face value, he cautioned, analyses risk underestimating other, more ordinary causes for violence and overestimating the intensity of nationalist sentiment. It may be, he proposed, that nationalism was not so much the cause of violence as violence was a nationalizing force.³⁸ Others have voiced the same concern that violence was manipulated by the press and was not, in fact, representative of life in the localities where it occurred. As mentioned, Mathias Niendorf in his monograph about the Border Province argued that instances of nationalist violence were actually exceptions to usually tranquil village life, often brought about by outsiders who settled or visited there. Increased reporting of violent nationalist conflicts by regional newspapers hence amounted to spotlighting what were actually the exceptions to the day-to-day calm.³⁹ Brendan Karch agreed that unpolitical brawls were depicted as anti-Polish by Upper Silesia's floundering interwar Polish movement in an attempt to use the need for defense against a common threat to mobilize Polish-speakers.⁴⁰

In the interwar German borderlands, it is true, Polish journals' articles about violence noticeably served the rationalization of the Polish nationalist movement's downturn under what were after all better legal circumstances than in the empire. Reports of assaults on Polish campaigners tended to be published after the election in the lead-up to which they had taken place, usually in the formulaic format of compendia, like the above-mentioned one of eight cases. Their evident purpose was to impress on readers the

³⁷ Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the language frontiers of imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 53-63.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

³⁹ Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 336.

⁴⁰ Brendan Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 163.

intensity of Poles' repression, so that the Polish movement's electoral failures would not appear to be owed to its own organizational and policy shortcomings.⁴¹ This exculpatory message was explicitly articulated by some pieces. Domanski, as head of the Union of Poles' electoral committee, for instance, released a statement following drastic Polish losses in the July 1932 vote proclaiming, "We openly admit the defeat, but we do not admit a weakness of the Polish people in Germany."⁴² The Polish movement had suffered a diminution of votes only, the declaration read, on account of an increased number of renegades, who had been led astray by Communist promises of economic relief, Center Party Germanizing from the pulpit, and, of course, fear of Nazi violence,⁴³ which last had rendered Polish campaigning "veritably impossible."⁴⁴ After the Diet elections earlier that year, the *Polska Zachodnia* had similarly maintained that "the traditional anti-Polish moral and physical terror" having "recently been doubled by the Hitler shock troops" had made poor Polish showings at the ballot box well-nigh inevitable.⁴⁵ Another piece published after that election went so far as to suggest that Nazi terror had been easily able to quell Polish activism in Upper Silesia because it had reawakened the Polish population's memories of plebiscite-era violence.⁴⁶

The German authorities' investigations of violent incidents are often treated as proof that, in contrast to how these were represented in Polish reporting, they were ordinary brawls, which were only later enlisted for propagandistic purposes. Brendan

⁴¹ "Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 10, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 20, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁴² "Wir geben die Niederlage offen zu, wir gestehen jedoch nicht eine Schwäche des polnischen Volkes in Deutschland ein."; "An die Polen in Deutschland!," *Nowiny Codzienne*, August 4, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 10, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁴³ "Was weiter?," *Nowiny Codzienne*, August 4, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 10, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁴⁴ "geradezu unmöglich"; "Der furchtbare Wahlterror im Oppelner Schlesien" (translation), *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, April 30, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁴⁵ "den traditionellen antipolnischen moralischen und physischen Terror hinzufügen, der gegenüber den Polen angewandt wird und letztens durch die Hitlerstoßtrupps verdoppelt wurde"; "Der brutale preußische Terror hat eine neue Wahlniederlage der Polen im Oppelner Schlesien verursacht" (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, April 25, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁴⁶ "Hitler-Methode," trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 11, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

Karch, for one, employs the example of a drunken melee at a village Mandolin Club dance, which was subsequently publicized as an anti-Polish attack despite a government investigation that confirmed its unpolitical nature, to illustrate that a faltering Polish movement was inventing nationalist violence.⁴⁷ Besides the riot that broke out in Oppeln when a visiting Polish theatre troupe performed a Polish opera there, he does not provide additional cases of violence that was portrayed as anti-Polish but according to the government was not, though further such examples do exist, including some to which Nazis were party. When the Polish campaigner Klinik lodged a complaint that the Nazi Lasinka brothers had harassed him twice owing to his Polish-ness, not only the right-wing *Schlesische Zeitung*⁴⁸ but also the government inquiry concluded that the altercations had been nothing more than drunken pub fights that Klinik was exploiting, as he had reportedly announced at the time that he would.⁴⁹ In another case, the Union of Poles protested on behalf of a man, who had allegedly been beaten up and blackmailed due to his membership in a Polish choir. When government officials questioned him, however, he averred that he was an NSDAP member. They gathered that he had probably suffered ill-treatment not for his involvement with the singing group but for his secret relationship with a girl from the neighboring village.⁵⁰ In a different instance, a quarrel arose over the price of a cow, which, the two Nazi buyers grumbled, would be much less in Poland than what the Polish-speaking cottager was asking. That dire threats and violence followed this exchange was not confirmed by eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, the incident, paired with the unlawful removal earlier in the day of a poster hung by the cottager, was taken by the Polish press to amount to voter intimidation ahead of the Diet election.⁵¹ In reality, it appears to have been an ordinary economic dispute, if overlaid

⁴⁷ Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 162-163.

⁴⁸ "Die Polen fabrizieren Terrormeldungen," *Schlesische Zeitung*, [December 1930]. APO, NPO, 108.

⁴⁹ "Betrifft: August Klinik – Dziergowitz," December 3, 1930. APO, NPO, 108.

⁵⁰ "Beschwerde des Polenbundes an den Völkerbundsrat wegen eines angeblichen Überfalles auf den Grubenarbeiter Edmund Adamiok aus Kamienietz, Kreis Gleiwitz," May 24, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁵¹ "Betrifft angeblicher [sic] Terror gegen den Häusler Schierz in Lugnian," May 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 112; Witness statements, May 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

with xenophobia. This discrepancy between press and government reporting was also picked up on by Pieter Judson, who focused on the case study of a brawl in the Bohemian village of Bergreichenstein. While the German and Czech press accounts had in common that they saw the fight as the product of the population's split into two well-defined and antagonistic nations, the government's inquiry foregrounded the contingent factors that led to the disturbance of the peace and characterized the hostile sentiments underlying it as transitory, still remediable through determined intervention. The government report did not consider the population's division into nationalities final.⁵² However, Judson does acknowledge that the authorities recognized nationalism as a cause for the unrest, though they considered it the province of a nationalist hard core with whom the crowd had gone along.⁵³ In comparisons of the nationalist press and official government reports like this, Judson and other historians implicitly treat the latter as objective. Karch even explicitly affirmed that, "the historical record shows a pattern of fairness and authoritativeness in German investigations" of the Polish minority's complaints, which was "prompted by concern over the fair treatment of the much larger German-speaking minority in Poland."⁵⁴

However, while nationalist reporting had indeed long falsified accounts of clashes, including between Nazis and Poles, the German government's reports in the Weimar period had their own reasons to downplay such violence. For one thing, Polish articles regularly charged that the authorities had done too little to check Nazis' violent nationalist excesses. After the Bütow county rally with pastor Domanski, at which the intruding Nazi mob had demanded that he give his address in German, for example, the *Głos Pogranicza* called for the dismissal not only of the two policemen present, who had failed to defend the Poles' rights or to call for backup, but also of the *Landrat*, who, the

⁵² Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 187-206.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 215-218.

⁵⁴ Brendan Karch, "Nationalism on the Margins: Silesians between Germany and Poland, 1848-1945" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2010), 234.

paper argued, had been either so complicit or so incompetent as to send so few officers in the first place.⁵⁵ In the context of Klinik's beating in Cosel too, the police was condemned for supposedly having intervened too late and for having made no arrests, even though the Polish population too paid the taxes that maintained the police force.⁵⁶ Regarding previously unmentioned events too, newspaper pieces complained of official foot-dragging. When a Polish campaigner was beaten and had his briefcase stolen by Nazis in the lead-up to the 1932 Diet election, for instance, the policeman who eventually accompanied the victim back to the crime scene reputedly merely took the culprits' personal information before departing, leaving the Pole to his fate. A second policeman, who happened to pass, did keep the Nazis at bay long enough for the campaigner to escape, the *Nowiny Codzienne* admitted, but the first official's behavior was nevertheless used to castigate the police.⁵⁷ Before that same election, police in Groß-Strehlitz county were said to have failed to intervene in a severe beating, even though it ostensibly occurred within earshot of the station.⁵⁸ The coordinator of Beuthen's Polish campaign for the July 1932 *Reichstag* election, for his part, allegedly met with "very tactless and haughty" treatment when he went to the police after having been beaten by three SA men for having defended the right of one of his subordinates to pass out flyers.⁵⁹ By the time the police condescended to return with him to the site of the attack, the *Nowiny Codzienne* reported, his assailants were long gone.⁶⁰ Since the German authorities were

⁵⁵ "Skandalöse Vorgänge in Oslawdamerow und Damsdorf. Hakatistische Banden überfallen die Polen. – Asiatische Zustände im Kreise Bütow. – Wir verlangen die Entfernung des Regierungspräsidenten in Köslin und des Landrats in Bütow," *Głos Pogranicza*, September 17, 1930, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 24, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

⁵⁶ "Ein schändlicher preussischer Terror gegenüber den Polen im Opper Schlesien. Die Stosstruppler und Polizeibeamten, die Schinder des polnischen Volkes" (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, October 13, 1930. APO, NPO, 109.

⁵⁷ "Eine Hitlerbande hat einen Kolportuer beraubt und verletzt" (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 5, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁵⁸ "Hitlerianer verletzen unsere Leute" (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 4, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁵⁹ "sehr taktlos und hochmütig"; "Unerhört brutaler Überfall der Hakenkreuzler," *Nowiny Codzienne*, August 5, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 10, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

subject to keen scrutiny by the international community, they could hardly let such accusations, which linked them with Germany's most radical nationalists, stand. They denied all insinuated dereliction of duty. In Cosel, in the official telling, the intelligence that Klinik was being harassed had taken some time to reach the policemen at the other end of the marketplace and so had crossing the bustling square to reach him.⁶¹ In Groß Strehlitz, the assault had, in fact, taken place outside of hearing range from the police station.⁶²

Beyond simply trying to clear themselves, German authorities also contradicted that the incidents reported in the Polish press had been brought about by one-sided wrongdoing on the part of Germans. They were quick to place blame for altercations on the Polish victims themselves, whom they routinely accused of unfriendly and irritating,⁶³ "brusque,"⁶⁴ and "provocative" behavior.⁶⁵ The Polish activist, whose briefcase had been stolen, for instance, was said to have forced his way onto a farm, whose German owners had made clear that he was unwelcome, in the course of his campaigning, thereby provoking the attack on him.⁶⁶ In Cosel, Klinik's pushiness about his flyers had prompted the Nazi intervention that became violent. It was likewise his ceaseless taunts in the police station's waiting room afterwards that roused the Nazi ringleader into threatening the smoking out of the town's Polish residents.⁶⁷ Outright distortion was evidently in play when the investigating authorities claimed that this menacing remark had been immediately followed up with the clarification, "By that I mean, that the Hitler party will win on September 14 and that the Polish party will be prohibited. Just like Germandom is

⁶¹ Report, October 30, 1930. APO, NPO, 110.

⁶² "Betrifft: Verletzung von Minderheitsangehörigen durch Anhänger der NSDAP," May 10, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁶³ "Betrifft: Meldungen der polnischen Presse über angeblichen Wahlterror," June 14, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁶⁴ "brüskes"; Ibid..

⁶⁵ Report, April 27, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁶⁶ "Betrifft: Vorfälle in Lichinia," May 13, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁶⁷ Report, October 24, 1930. APO, NPO, 109.

prohibited and oppressed in Poland.”⁶⁸ That anyone would append such a stilted qualification to a threat in the midst of heated verbal sparring seems unlikely. Similarly, an official report about the disrupted campaign rally with pastor Domanski in Bütow county maintained that following the meeting’s disbanding, the Polish attendees had lured the German intruders, who had stayed behind in the meeting hall, outside with cries for help, only to beat them up when they got outside.⁶⁹ That the Nazis’ purposeful dispersal of the meeting had turned into a cleverly laid ambush on them seems, again, implausible. Regarding complaints about the removal of Polish posters too, authorities pointed to wrongdoing on both sides. After all, they pointed out, minority members in their turn took down German posters.⁷⁰ This tendency to relativize German misconduct also raises the possibility that reports dismissing violent incidents as ordinary brawls may not always have been altogether truthful, though assessing their trustworthiness is now impossible. It is noteworthy, at the very least, that internal government reports often went through the Polish papers’ compilations of instances of harassment simply to dismiss the charge of nationalist motivations case by case.⁷¹ This brushing-off of allegations that violence had anti-Polish motives was just as formulaic as the Polish nationalist press’ making of such claims.

It is true that the German government’s handling of reported nationalist violence was guided by its concern for its international reputation and also, as Karch stresses, for the situation of the German minority in Poland. Republicans did point to the risk of aggravating the condition of the *Volksdeutsche* as a reason to take all necessary measures

⁶⁸ “Damit meinte ich, daß am 14. September die Hitlerpartei siegen und dann die polnische Partei verboten wird. Genauso wie das Deutschtum in Polen verboten und unterdrückt wird.”; Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Denkschrift über Vorfälle angeblich terroristischen Charakters gegen die polnische Minderheit in Preußen aus der Zeit vom 1. September bis 31. Dezember 1930.” APO, NPO, 109.

⁷⁰ “Betrifft: Meldungen der polnischen Presse über angeblichen Wahlterror,” June 14, 1932. APO, NPO, 112; “Zu OP III.3.M.484 Z 560 vom 19.5.1932,” May 23, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁷¹ “Denkschrift über Vorfälle angeblich terroristischen Charakters gegen die polnische Minderheit in Preußen aus der Zeit vom 1. September bis 31. Dezember 1930.” APO, NPO, 109; “Betrifft: Meldungen der polnischen Presse über angeblichen Wahlterror,” June 14, 1932. APO, NPO, 112; Report, May 28, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

to rein in Nazi terror, as will be shown later. The desire to avoid incidents going for mediation to international organizations, to whom the Polish government did submit complaints, is a – usually unspoken – undercurrent in all the government’s investigations. What has been overlooked, however, is that displaying a scrupulous treatment of Polish complaints was not the only way to deflect international scrutiny, but that denying the existence of a nationalist violence problem was another. Rather than take government investigations into alleged cases of nationalist violence as accounts of what truly happened, one should therefore weigh official and press accounts, with their respective biases, against one another. Sometimes played up and sometimes played down, nationalist violence, in which Nazis were prominently involved, does appear to have played a notable role in borderlands politics, especially in the run-up to elections, serving to delineate acceptable political activity in regions whose national belonging remained contested.

It was not only during election seasons that nationalist violence occurred. In late 1931, for instance, a crowd of Nazis disrupted and dispersed a Christmas party for Polish children and youths in the Upper Silesian village of Nakel.⁷² Around the same time, it came to a knifing in an Upper Silesian county bisected by the border when two Nazis, who were celebrating payday in a pub, caught sight of one of their party comrades entering the premises with a companion whose brother, they charged, had been a Polish insurgent back in 1921. This accompanying man was dangerously stabbed in the spleen during the ensuing brawl,⁷³ for which one of the Nazis received a three months’ prison sentence.⁷⁴ In the spring of that year, meanwhile, a Nazi sympathizer had showered abuse on a group of Polish youths that was on its way home from a Polish theatre performance

⁷² “Wieder eine Drohung der Hitlerleute. Die Nationalisten stören eine polnische Weihnachtsfeier in Nakel. Den Behörden zur Erwägung,” *Nowiny Codzienne*, January 20, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 23, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁷³ Police report, March 22, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

⁷⁴ Police report “Messerstecherei am 23. Dezember 1931 in Klein-Lagiewnik, Kreis Guttentag,” October 15, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

and her companion, an NSDAP member, had beaten one of the young men.⁷⁵ Most infamously, six truckloads of SA men fell upon a fire brigade festival held in the village of Glumen in the Border Province in August of the following year, in which Polish residents had participated alongside Germans.⁷⁶ There appears to have been general fighting, with Polish papers further detailing how the attackers had invaded a pub, where they beat up two Poles, and a private residence, whose inhabitants they assaulted and furniture they smashed.⁷⁷ The SA's planned drive on to nearby Zakrzewo, where pastor Domanski was resident, was prevented by the police.⁷⁸ Unprovoked acts of violence like these were in most ways simply manifestations of the Nazi culture of violence. However, they did occur in the context of a decades-old nationalist struggle, which arguably led radical German nationalists like the Nazis to consider simply being Polish an encroachment on the aspirations for monolithic Germandom in the contested regions. When Nazis pummeled Polish-speakers on a local train from Danzig to adjacent Sopot, for instance, they apparently did so because the Poles had "provocatively made use of their mother tongue" and they had "energetically refused to tolerate this provocative behavior."⁷⁹ Even in the absence of any activism, the mere act of speaking Polish – like participating in village life or attending a Polish play - was considered to warrant repression.

Where even passively being Polish sparked retribution, activism that consciously promoted Polish identities could lead to sometimes spectacular violence, as demonstrated by two notorious episodes, namely the riots that met the Polish School Association's

⁷⁵ Report "Mißhandlung und Beleidigung von Angehörigen der polnischen Minderheit am 9.3.1931 in Hindenburg-Biskupitz," March 18, 1931. APO, NPO, 110.

⁷⁶ Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 336.

⁷⁷ "Die Hitler-Leute haben nach einem festgelegten Plan schon lange den Überfall auf die Polen in Glumen vorbereitet," *Nowiny Codzienne*, August 19, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick auf die polnische Presse*, August 24, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ "in provozierender Weise ihrer Muttersprache bedient," "sie sich diese herausfordernde Art energisch verboten"; "Polnische Frechheit - Beschwerde gegen Nationalsozialisten," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 7/8, 1931. MOB.

decision to open a minority school in Masurian Groß Dembowitz and a Katowice theatre troupe's guest performance of a Polish opera in Oppeln. The former affair got underway in December 1931, when the sons of the *Gemeindevorsteher* of Groß Dembowitz thrashed Gottlieb Pozny, the elderly pub owner who had instigated the foundation of the minority school.⁸⁰ In nearby Jedwabno, the School Association's chauffeur was beaten and stabbed by the Nazis Sawitzki and Dimitrowitz while the surrounding mob tried to topple his van.⁸¹ A month passed, but then in January 1932 a state prosecutor was dispatched to Jedwabno to investigate and make arrests.⁸² This belated effort at law enforcement sparked violent protest, during which the state prosecutor was beaten. It was this mob violence against a government official and the resulting trial that, more than the original attacks, aroused government and media attention. The ringleader of the violence against the state prosecutor, a certain Otto, and over one-hundred of his accomplices were tried speedily in a well-publicized court case,⁸³ though they were all cleared or got off lightly, Otto with a ten-day prison sentence that pre-trial custody was considered to have fulfilled.⁸⁴ Sawitzki and Dimitrowitz⁸⁵ as well as Pozny's attackers, in the meantime, were acquitted altogether due to an ostensible lack of evidence against them.⁸⁶

Predictably, Polish newspapers aired their outrage. The contrast between the month-long delay in sending the state prosecutor after the initial attacks and the swift trying and sentencing of the state prosecutor's assailants was decried as a clear sign that

⁸⁰ "Deutsche Gerechtigkeit," *Kurier Poznanski*, March 1, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁸¹ Article, *Mazur*, March 2, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁸² "Geschrei um die polnischen Seelenverkäufer: Beginn des Prozesses um die Jedwabnoer Polenmär," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 16/17, 1932. MOB.

⁸³ "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

⁸⁴ "Das Urteil im Jedwabno-Prozeß," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 5, 1932. MOB.

⁸⁵ "Die Verbrecher sind nicht ermittelt worden," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, March 2, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁸⁶ "Deutsche Gerechtigkeit," *Kurier Poznanski*, February 24, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

the German state valued its authority more than the rights of the Polish minority.⁸⁷ Even the punishments of the state prosecutor's assailants were preposterously modest.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Sawitziki and Dimitrowitz had been cleared despite the testimony of a whole group of Polish-speaking school children against them. Whereas adult witnesses sympathetic to the perpetrators professed not to have seen or recognized them, the youngsters affirmed that they had witnessed the attack from a hill while sledding. Their statements in court were less assured than their avowals of Sawitzki and Dimitrowitz's guilt during pre-trial hearings, but the *Gazeta Olsztynska* maintained that it was mainly the denigration by the children's German teachers of their intellect and of their supposedly "lively imagination" that led to the dismissal of their evidence.⁸⁹ Having failed to apprehend Sawitzki and Dimitrowitz promptly in the first place, the German justice system contrived to let them go free.

In contrast, the local German press, first and foremost the regional NSDAP organ, portrayed the initial attacks as German self-help against the encroachment that were Polish schools, to which the republican government had overreacted by making arrests. Thereby it had unleashed the expression of the villagers' sense of justice in the form of mob violence against the state prosecutor. The *Allensteiner Zeitung*, for instance, was reported to have termed the coming to naught of the plan to found a minority school at Groß Dembowitz, brought about by the assaults as well as a failure to recruit sufficient numbers of prospective students, "'the good success of gratifying self-help'."⁹⁰ The *Neidenburger Zeitung* likewise gloated that "'the ground under [the Poles'] feet is beginning to burn'," though it did admit that the attack on a state prosecutor, who had

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ "lebhaften Phantasie"; "Die Verbrecher sind nicht ermittelt worden," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, March 2, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 9, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁹⁰ "'der gute Erfolg einer erfreulichen Selbsthilfe'" ; "Deutsche 'Selbsthilfe' in Masuren und die Lage der Deutschen in Polen," *Kurier Poznanski*, January 23, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, February 3, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.; see also: "Nach den letzten Ereignissen in Jedwabno," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, January 14, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 20, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

after all been dispatched so late that no severe penalties for the arrested could have been expected, had been unwise.⁹¹ Their certainty of this kind of public support, even from the non-Nazi press, might have emboldened the rioters to fall upon the state prosecutor in the first place, the *Gazeta Olsztynska* alleged.⁹²

It was the Nazi party's *Preußische Zeitung*, though, that launched the largest-scale press campaign about the Jedwabno case. After all, of the 104 villagers standing trial for the assault on the prosecutor thirty-one were Nazis.⁹³ Long Jedwabno's residents had to look on in frustration, the party organ explained, "as the Pollak gained ground step by step, how the Polish element grows in influence with every passing day due to the regulations regarding minority schools and extends its positions by the most rigorous means."⁹⁴ Flouting the constitution's stipulation that schools should teach in the spirit of international understanding, unlike German schools, minority schools were nothing less than "an advance guard of the Polish army system," the journal insisted.⁹⁵ Due to the German government's misplaced "'objectivity'" in the treatment of the two nationalities, there had been "Nowhere a dam, nowhere a halt" to check Poles' activism.⁹⁶ In December 1931, the "will to self-assertion of these borderland Germans, who in an eternal fight resist Polish presumption and arrogance" had finally burst forth.⁹⁷

⁹¹ "'der Boden unter den Füßen zu brennen beginne"; "Nach den letzten Ereignissen in Jedwabno," *Gazeta Olsztynska*, January 14, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, January 20, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

⁹⁴ "wie der Pollak Schritt für Schritt Boden gewinnt, wie das polnische Element auf Grund der Bestimmungen über die Minderheitenschulen mit jedem Tage an Einfluß zunimmt und mit den rigorosesten Mitteln seine Positionen ausbaut"; "Mit Tränen in den Augen: Deutschlandlied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 20, 1932. MOB.

⁹⁵ "ein vorgeschobener Posten des polnischen Armeesystems"; "Geschrei um die polnischen Seelenverkäufer: Beginn des Prozesses um die Jedwabnoer Polenmär," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 16/17, 1932. MOB.

⁹⁶ "'Objektivität'," "Nirgends ein Damm, nirgends ein Halt!"; "Mit Tränen in den Augen: Deutschlandlied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 20, 1932. MOB.

⁹⁷ "Behauptungswillen dieser Grenzlanddeutschen, die im ewigen Kampf streben gegen polnische Anmaßung und Ueberheblichkeit"; Ibid.

Jedwabno's inhabitants no longer being able to tolerate the provocation that were Polish schools in a province as vulnerable as East Prussia, a "spontaneous outbreak of the people's will" had occurred.⁹⁸ When the crowd rioted in response to arrests being made for this righteous outburst, it was composed, the *Preußische Zeitung* stressed repeatedly, of fundamentally "peaceful and upstanding people," whose disaffectedness simply manifested itself in a "somewhat robust" manner.⁹⁹ They had been unable to comprehend that fellow villagers were being apprehended merely because some Poles had received a "slap on the wrist."¹⁰⁰ "[I]n the eyes of 'real Germans'," ¹⁰¹ that "some Polish provocateur or agitator had been thrashed by some East Prussians who love their country"¹⁰² in reaction to the "Polish challenge in the border zone"¹⁰³ would after all have been a "trifle."¹⁰⁴ All that had happened was that "a few Polish provocateurs, who had presumed to abuse German people on German ground, had gotten a roasting" and now the government was in effect putting a whole village on trial for standing up to an outsized response to such an occurrence.¹⁰⁵ Naturally, the *Preußische Zeitung* called for the trial to end in a general acquittal, for that outcome alone "could put Polish arrogance in its place."¹⁰⁶ Anything less would only create "martyrs of the German cause," behind which

⁹⁸ "der spontane Ausbruch des Volkswillens"; Ibid.

⁹⁹ "friedlicher und braver Menschen," "etwas robuster Form"; "Fahrt nach Jedwabno," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 21, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰⁰ "Denkzettels"; "Geschrei um die polnischen Seelenverkäufer: Beginn des Prozesses um die Jedwabnoer Polenmär," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 16/17, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰¹ "in den Augen 'echter Deutscher'"; "Ein unerhörter Kommentar der Nationalsozialisten zu den Vorgängen in Jedwabno," *Nowiny Codzienne*, January 29, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, February 3, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

¹⁰² "weil irgendein polnischer Provokateur oder Agitator von einigen ihr Land liebenden Ostpreußen verdroschen worden sind.""; Ibid.

¹⁰³ "'polnische Herausforderung in der Grenzzone'"; Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Kleinigkeit"; Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "wobei einige polnische Provokateure, die sich erlaubten, deutsche Menschen auf deutschem Boden zu beschimpfen, die Jacke voll bekamen"; "Mit Tränen in den Augen: Deutschlandlied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 20, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰⁶ "das die polnische Arroganz in ihre Schranken weisen könnte"; "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

all East Prussia allegedly stood.¹⁰⁷ This unity in support of Jedwabno's rioters was finding expression, the journal told time and again, in a wave of increased support for the Nazi party. Echoing Wilhelm II's August 1914 speech, the paper declared that in Jedwabno "there are no more political parties, there are only National Socialists."¹⁰⁸ In the village, fifty new members had reportedly joined the party.¹⁰⁹ Even a 67-year-old had reputedly vowed to become an active fighter in the SA now that this episode had rejuvenated him and rekindled his investment in politics.¹¹⁰ An account of a reporter's day trip to Jedwabno made a particular point of relating the solidarity of the villagers with one another and with the Nazi movement.¹¹¹ The *Preußische Zeitung* propagandistically exploited the violent reaction of villagers, among them many Nazis, who felt that the plan for the establishment of a minority school encroached on the rights and security of a region that was German, but vulnerably so.

Grandeur yet in scale and repercussions was the violence that erupted in Oppeln, German Upper Silesia's capital, when a theatre troupe from Katowice, the capital of the region's now-Polish part, visited to perform the Polish opera *Halka* in the spring of 1929. The troupe's initial application to perform had been rejected by the town's Social Democratic mayor on the grounds that a Polish production would constitute a political event, for which the municipal theater was not available. This decision was, however, overridden by *Oberpräsident* Hans Lukaschek, who pointed up the importance of adhering to minority protection agreements, which among other things safeguarded minorities' right to a cultural life, and of thereby hopefully ensuring similar opportunities for the German minority in Eastern Upper Silesia.¹¹² The performance was thus

¹⁰⁷ "Märtyrer der deutschen Sache"; "Geschrei um die polnischen Seelenverkäufer: Beginn des Prozesses um die Jedwabnoer Polenmär," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 16/17, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰⁸ "keine politischen Parteien mehr, es gibt nur noch Nationalsozialisten"; "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ "Das 'Gefecht' von Jedwabno: Die 5 Haupt-Beschuldigten aus der Haft entlassen," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 27, 1932. MOB.

¹¹¹ "Fahrt nach Jedwabno," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 21, 1932. MOB.

¹¹² Karch, "Nationalism on the Margins," 241-242.

scheduled to go ahead on April 28, but while the republican press dutifully if reluctantly advertised it, the nationalist papers, first and foremost Lothar Knaak's far-right *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, were up in arms.¹¹³ On the day, Nazis passed out leaflets in the downtown that expressed opposition to the performance and to the government that had permitted it. Eight young members of the party, alongside two *Stahlhelm* youths, subsequently sneaked into the performance without tickets and threw stink bombs from the balcony. They were apprehended and escorted out, such that the cast could finish the show. Upon its conclusion, however, the actors and musicians found that a crowd of people, which law enforcement officers were trying to push back, had gathered outside the theatre. Nervous, they left the theatre by the back exit, unaccompanied by police, and made for the train station. Part of the throng followed them and once at the station some of its members, many of them alleged to be Nazis, cornered and beat performers in the tunnel connecting the entrance with the main hall. The attack only came to an end when the police arrived at the scene.¹¹⁴

The response to the events was swift. Polish newspapers decried the upheaval, underscoring its brutality, which they considered premeditated and which they routinely exaggerated.¹¹⁵ Across Poland, anti-German protests were held.¹¹⁶ In Katowice, the German theatre troupe had its posters defaced and was debarred from use of the city's municipal theatre.¹¹⁷ That aggression had been bound to precipitate negative

¹¹³ Ibid., 242; "Muß eine deutsche Zeitung Polenpropaganda machen?," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹¹⁴ Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 165.

¹¹⁵ "Nach den blutigen Vorfällen in Oppeln. Die Einzelheiten über den brutalen Überfall auf die Schauspieler." (translation), *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; "Polnisches Theater in Oppeln" (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, April 29, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; "Oberschlesischer Grenzbericht für die Monate April, Mai und Juni 1929." GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 593; "Hakenkreuz-Rowdys in Oppeln," *Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹¹⁶ "Heute polnischer Kampftag gegen Deutschland," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 4, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; "Polen sagt uns den Boykott an!," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 4, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹¹⁷ "Oberschlesischer Grenzbericht für die Monate April, Mai und Juni 1929." GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 593; "Die Heldentaten der Oppelner Nationalsozialisten," *Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; "Hakenkreuz-Rowdys in Oppeln," *Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

consequences for Eastern Upper Silesia's German minority, as well as for German foreign policy, was foregrounded by German republican journals' denunciations of the violent excesses.¹¹⁸ In order to limit the fallout from the incident, this press now sought to dissociate Germandom at large from perpetrators portrayed as mere irresponsible youths. Their conduct, which the papers tried to brush off as a boyish prank, would, it was hoped, not be assigned too much weight.¹¹⁹ The German right likewise propagated the image of the offenders as hot-headed youths, whose actions should not be treated with too much seriousness, but it simultaneously defended as righteous their nationalist motive of fighting back against an infringement of Upper Silesia's Germandom, committed by the Polish actors and facilitated by the German government. Though the conservative *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost* joined in lamenting the repercussion of the disturbance, particularly for the Germans of Eastern Upper Silesia, it also emphasized the provocation the Polish troupe and the regional government had given by putting on and permitting, respectively, a performance that was an insult to "Upper Silesia's German consciousness [*Deutschbewußtsein*]." ¹²⁰ More vociferously, the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, deeply implicated in the agitation against the show, foregrounded the government's culpability for authorizing the production to go ahead and for thereby triggering the population's justified anger. If this indignation and the thrashing the performers had resultantly received had come as a surprise to the government, then it, the paper scoffed, had fatally misread the popular mood in the German East, which spurned "the new-Prussian minority politics, which grants the Poles more rights than the Germans."¹²¹ This widespread, feverish vexation at the coming of the theatre troupe had gone to the heads of

¹¹⁸ "Fort mit der Knüppelpolitik," *Oppelner Kurier*, April 30, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹¹⁹ "Die 'Oppelner Vorfälle' abgeurteilt," *Oppelner Nachrichten*, June 4, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹²⁰ "Deutschbewußtseins Oberschlesiens"; "Berlin und die Oppelner Ausschreitungen," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, April 30, 1929. APO, NO, 266.

¹²¹ "der neupreußischen Minderheitenpolitik, die den Polen mehr Rechte einräumt als den Deutschen"; "Die Oppelner 'Schwerverbrecher': Deutsche Fanatiker sind besser als Landesverräter," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

the attackers, impetuous youths “for whose actions nobody can be made responsible.”¹²² For all their imprudence, though, these “German fanatics” were, one headline in the *Tageszeitung* proclaimed, preferable to “traitors” like those in control of the government.¹²³

Nazi propaganda too laid the unrest at the government’s door and endorsed the miscreants’ nationalist, defensive impulse. The incendiary leaflet that NSDAP members had handed out in town on the day of the performance had already lambasted the government for pursuing a “politics of lacking *völkisch* pride, of bourgeois spinelessness [*Knochenerweichung*] and of political horse trading” in an ill-judged effort to guarantee the rights of Eastern Upper Silesia’s Germans.¹²⁴ It was a product of this approach that the Polish theatre company had been enabled to put on a profoundly political, propagandistic spectacle “in the German city Oppeln and in Upper Silesia, which since the plebiscite of 1921 unequivocally belongs to Germandom.”¹²⁵ In order to reject the authorities’ tactic, readers were urged to join the Nazi movement, which instead fought for the preservation of “German honor” and the creation of a strong Germany, which alone would be in a position to “truly help our brothers beyond the current borders.”¹²⁶ After the show’s disruption and the assault on the performers, a statement released by Oppeln’s party chapter averred that its members, though they had handed out the oppositional leaflets and sat in on the production without tickets, had taken part in neither.¹²⁷ However, the communiqué went on to reiterate that, “Also after these incidents the party stands by the view laid down in its flyer that the preferential treatment of the

¹²² “für deren Taten niemand verantwortlich gemacht werden kann”; “Die Folgen der polnischen Theateraufführung in Oppeln,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, April 30, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹²³ “Die Oppelner ‘Schwerverbrecher’: Deutsche Fanatiker sind besser als Landesverräter,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; “Die Folgen der polnischen Theateraufführung in Oppeln,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, April 30, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹²⁴ “die Politik des mangelnden völkischen Stolzes, der spießbürgerlichen Knochenerweichung und des politischen Kuhhandels”; “Deutsche Volksgenossen!,” April 28, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹²⁵ “in der deutschen Stadt Oppeln und in dem seit der Abstimmung von 1921 einwandfrei dem Deutschtum zugehörigen Oberschlesien”; Ibid.

¹²⁶ “deutsche Ehre,” “unseren Brüdern jenseits der derzeitigen Grenzen wirklich helfen können”; Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Eine Erklärung der Nationalsozialisten,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

Polish machinations by the authorities constitutes a danger for Upper Silesia, because through this the false impression is awakened that Upper Silesia is really a Polish land.”¹²⁸ “If the performance had proceeded smoothly,” the statement continued, “the Polish newspapers would surely have written that Oppeln’s population is Polish or at least Polonophile [*polenfreundlich*].”¹²⁹ Bluntly, Oppeln’s NSDAP branch articulated the rationale that underpinned much nationalist violence in the borderlands: Polish activism, particularly if successful, had the potential to belie the narrative that the border regions were profoundly, indubitably German. Therefore, it had to be made clear to residents of these areas that a Polish identity was beyond the pale and to the wider world that the provinces were anything but Polish. For this purpose, Nazis and their ilk did not hesitate to resort to violence.

The scorn for the government's attitude continued into the subsequent period of trials, with their defenders arguing that the official stance towards the violence was prejudicing the culprits' treatment. Within two days of the performance, *Oberpräsident* Lukaschek, responsible for pushing through the authorization of the event in the first place, sent a telegram to Beuthen's Polish consulate, in which he pledged to do everything in his power to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice.¹³⁰ Foreign minister Stresemann made similar promises to Poland.¹³¹ Stresemann's assurances in particular were said to bias the proceedings against the accused, even in the admitted absence of direct government pressure on the court, when in June the stink bomb throwers became the first to be tried.¹³² It was this lack of objectivity that

¹²⁸ “Auch nach diesen Vorfällen hält die Partei an ihrer in dem Flugblatt niedergelegten Stellungnahme fest, daß die Begünstigung der polnischen Umtriebe durch die Behörden deshalb eine Gefahr für Oberschlesien bildet, weil durch sie der falsche Eindruck erweckt wird, als sei Oberschlesien eigentlich ein polnisches Land.”; *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ “Wäre die Aufführung reibungslos verlaufen, so hätten die polnischen Zeitungen sicher geschrieben, die Oppelner Bevölkerung sei polnisch oder mindestens polenfreundlich.”; *Ibid*.

¹³⁰ “Dr. Lukaschek an den polnischen Generalkonsul,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹³¹ *Ibid*.

¹³² “Staatsanwalt beantragt Gefängnis,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 5, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

Stresemann's commitments had ostensibly created that the stink bomb throwers themselves cited when they unsuccessfully requested a postponement of the trial until such time as they had found a Nazi replacement for their public defender and when they subsequently refused to testify.¹³³ At their appeal two months later, the Nazi party's leading lawyer, Hans Frank, who successfully took charge of their defense, made out that the state prosecutor had only pressed charges at all at Stresemann's behest.¹³⁴ Further agitating the right, the government, beyond vowing punishment, paid travel allowances to the artists, so that they could return to Oppeln to testify in court against "innocent Germans,"¹³⁵ and awarded the Polish minority a considerable theatre subsidy as compensation, just because, as *Gauleiter* Brückner put it in a speech, some insolent actors had "gotten a proper thrashing."¹³⁶ Sentencing the perpetrators of disturbances that had been, to use Brückner's term, proper would only, it was argued, brand the events as sufficiently severe to warrant punishment and hence legitimate the Polish bellyaching about them.¹³⁷

In the absence of government firmness towards the Poles, the unrest had been a defensive act, it was argued, necessary to show that Oppeln and the province whose capital it was remained firmly German and akin to the fight for the region's Germandom in the plebiscite era. The trauma of that time was claimed to have roused the perpetrators to action. Their traumatized nationalism should have been taken seriously as an extenuating circumstance, the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* insisted about the stink bomb throwers, especially as a counterweight to the considerations introduced by Stresemann's assurances.¹³⁸ Having experienced the Polish insurgencies and "Polish

¹³³ "Die Oppelner Vorfälle vor Gericht," *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, June 4, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹³⁴ Report, August 12, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹³⁵ "die unschuldigen Deutschen"; "Ein entdeckungsreicher Tag im Oppelner 'Prozeß'," *Polska Zachodnia*, October 9, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹³⁶ "anständige Keile bezogen haben"; "Betrifft: Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Ratibor der NSDAP," June 14, 1929, p. 5. APO, RO, 1800.

¹³⁷ "Ganz gemeiner Verrat der Sozialdemokratie!," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹³⁸ "Das politische Urteil von Oppeln," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

propaganda and...its victory in the whole East” less than a decade earlier and being motivated by their “love of Germandom” and their “deep desire for freedom,” they had sought to stand up to the latest iteration of this threatening Polish propaganda, unrestrained by the prudence of adulthood, the paper explained.¹³⁹ In that vein, the editor of the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, Lothar Knaak, who was later tried for and acquitted of incitement, subsequently also hosted an overflowing protest meeting “against the verdict of the Court of Lay Assessors of June 4, against the gagging of German cities’ freedom and against the increasing Polonization of Western Upper Silesia.”¹⁴⁰ At this event, Knaak alleged that the production of *Halka* had constituted the “first victory” of a wider Polonization campaign and had been intended to help incite a new Polish uprising.¹⁴¹ He further likened this supposed present danger to the past perils of the immediate postwar era. In what was now Bydgoszcz in late 1918 too, he declared, the authorities had laughed off the notion of danger – until it was too late and West Prussia largely lost to the Poznań uprising. Knaak called for Germans to rally around Germandom’s defense again like they had in the plebiscite period, though doing so was now too often prohibited out of unsound foreign policy considerations, or else, he warned, the dead of the St Anne Mountain would have fallen in vain for the preservation of Upper Silesia’s inclusion in Germany.¹⁴² Two months later, the stink bomb throwers’ appeal was heard and the Nazi party’s leading lawyer, Hans Frank, came to Oppeln to – successfully – argue their case. A leaflet announcing a rally with the visiting Nazi luminary not only condemned Stresemann’s assurances to Poland, but, as Knaak had done, also urged the region’s Germans to bethink themselves of the spirit of the plebiscite

¹³⁹ “die polnische Propaganda kennengelernt und ihren Sieg im ganzen Osten erlebt,” “Liebe zum Deutschland,” “tiefen Sehnsucht nach Freiheit”; Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ “gegen das Urteil des Schöffengerichts vom 4. Juni, gegen die Knebelung der Freiheit deutscher Städte und gegen die zunehmende Polonisierung Westoberschlesiens”; “Große Kundgebung!,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 9, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁴¹ “ersten Sieg”; Report, June 11, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁴² “Westoberschlesien in Gefahr!,” *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 12, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

era and become “masters of the situation” again.¹⁴³ At the retrial, Frank himself in a speech openly lauded the unrest that had greeted the performance for proving that “this city really is German and that its population is ready to defend Germandom.”¹⁴⁴

In October, those suspected of participation in the beatings at the train station had to appear in court. The Nazis among them, alongside their attorneys, turned up sporting buttons that read “Hands off Upper Silesia,”¹⁴⁵ which were also being sold at Nazi rallies around this time.¹⁴⁶ Again, the implication was that the perpetrators conceived of Upper Silesia as under imminent threat from Polish territorial claims. The judge in the case, as in the stink bomb throwers', demonstrated some sympathy for this view. He did sentence five men to between three and eight months in prison and one youth to a fine, expressing disapprobation of an attack that, all understandable motivations aside, had targeted artists, including women.¹⁴⁷ However, he also hinted that the court should indeed consider what the Polish performance's – by imputation provocative – purpose had been. He appreciated that the young attackers had been of an impressionable age when they had witnessed the violence of the plebiscite era and that they had been taught ever since to consider Eastern Upper Silesia part of the *Heimat* still.¹⁴⁸ The idea that the rioters had felt they were acting to protect Upper Silesia from a threat akin to that it had faced in the plebiscite era was thus appealed to throughout the trials, with some success.

¹⁴³ “Herren der Situation”; “Deutsche, vergeßt es nie!,” August 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁴⁴ “daß diese Stadt tatsächlich deutsch ist und daß seine Bevölkerung bereit ist, das Deutschtum zu schützen”; “Die Glorifizierung der Terroristen. Die Oppelner Hakatisten ‘ehrten’ die polenfeindlichen Schläger,” *Polska Zachodnia*, August 16, 1929, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 21, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁴⁵ “Hände weg von Oberschlesien”; “Komödie der preußischen Justiz” (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, October 8, 1929. APO, NO, 267.

¹⁴⁶ Report, October 10, 1929. APO, RO, 1800.

¹⁴⁷ “Das Urteil des revanchedurstigen Richters für die revanchedurstigen Prügelhelden” (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, October 13, 1929. APO, NPO, 267; “Das Urteil im Oppelner Prozeß,” *Oberschlesische Volksstimme*, October 13, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁴⁸ “Das Urteil des revanchedurstigen Richters für die revanchedurstigen Prügelhelden” (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, October 13, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

During that last trial, it emerged that the Polish side had consciously substantially exaggerated the damage wrought by the attack at the train station. For one, the policemen and doctors who had been called to the scene testified that, contrary to Polish claims, the victims' injuries had, with one exception, been minor.¹⁴⁹ More damagingly yet, a certain Wende, who was a German-speaking musician with the Katowice troupe, gave evidence that he had been instructed to report injuries and the destruction of his instrument, though neither he nor his instrument had been harmed.¹⁵⁰ Others too, he said, had borne false witness. Wende was backed up by his colleague Langer, a fellow German-speaker, who attested that the troupe's leadership had pressured him into reporting damage when he had not been injured nor his instrument ruined.¹⁵¹

This Polish exaggeration of the assault's consequences is invoked by Brendan Karch to support his view that the episode was simply the most prominent instance of violence being dramatized and often falsified in its after-the-fact portrayal by the region's competing nationalist movements in order to suggest the presence of firm and antagonistic dividing lines among nationalities, though the aggressive acts had at best, as in this case, a complicated relation to such divisions. After all, not only did Wende and Langer identify as German but so did ten of the troupe's members in total, one of whom was the only casualty of the beating whose wounds were sufficiently serious to require bandaging.¹⁵² That non-Poles had fallen victim to anti-Polish violence is a testament in Karch's eyes to the murkiness of national identity in the region. Furthermore, Karch stresses that the disturbance would not in itself have become such a major issue, occupying Upper Silesia for months, had the Polish and German nationalist movements not instrumentalized it for the purposes of mobilization, the one by exaggerating its

¹⁴⁹ "Der Massenprozeß wegen der Oppelner Vorfälle," *Oppelner Kurier*, October 8, 1929. APO, NPO, 267; "Zweiter Tag des großen Theaterprozesses," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, October 9, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁵⁰ "Die Anklage muß fallen!," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, October 10, 1929. APO, NPO, 267;

"Zusammenbruch der Oppelner Anklage," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, October 10, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁵¹ "Zusammenbruch der Oppelner Anklage," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, October 10, 1929. APO, NPO, 267; "Sensation im Oppelner Theaterprozeß," *Oppelner Kurier*, October 10, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁵² Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 167.

brutality, the other by turning the performance into a portent of renewed threat to Upper Silesia's Germandom.¹⁵³ While Karch is correct that the episode would not have attained the same noteworthiness without its heavy instrumentalization, that circumstance does not change that even without magnification by the press the unrest was a large-scale event, driven by nationalist resentments and fears. Republican papers at the time did make the case that it had been newspaper magnates and party leaders who had stoked in the small fry that were the perpetrators the misguided nationalism so often invoked as an apologia for the unrest.¹⁵⁴ The nefarious influence of Knaak and his ilk is beyond doubt, but republicans had their own motivations to foreground it. Putting the spotlight on a few prominent nationalist firebrands was better for Germany's reputation than acknowledging violent mass nationalism. That anti-Polish antagonisms, surely not simply implanted by recent press and party rhetoric, actuated the perpetrators is accepted even by Karch.¹⁵⁵ Certainly, propaganda that denounced the threat posed by Polish intrusions into the German consensus aspired to by German nationalists flourished before, not only after, the show. That the German identity of some victims complicates the nationalist nature of the attack seems dubious, moreover. Germans' membership in the Katowice troupe speaks more to the presence of sizeable minorities on either side of the border than to the fluidity of national identities. In his eagerness to stress the persistence of national indifference and grass-roots coexistence, Karch thus seeks to fit even a nationalist riot into the narrative typical of the literature on national indifference that holds violence in borderland regions to have been both less common and less nationalist than it was made out to be. While this may be true, nationalist violence did exist, impelled, the Oppeln theatre case illustrates, by fears that Upper Silesia, as home to a Polish-speaking

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁵⁴ "Die Heldentat der Oppelner Nationalsozialisten," *Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266; "Der harmlose Dr. Knaak," *Volksblatt*, June 12, 1932. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁵⁵ Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 165.

minority, continued to have the same vulnerability to being claimed by Poland that it had exhibited during the plebiscite period.

All this is not to deny that there do exist cases, in which nationalist resentments like those that fueled the Oppeln theatre riot merely served as superficial justifications for violence that had in actuality been perpetrated for unrelated reasons. Most notably, the Potempa murder was turned into a right-wing *cause célèbre* by the nationalist press, though none of the killers ever professed to have targeted Pietrzuch on account of his ethnicity. While there was a portion of Nazi violence in the borderlands whose nationalist motivations it is unhelpful to belittle, it thus of course remains necessary to be aware of the utility it could have for Nazis to camouflage wanton violence in a widely acceptable nationalist guise.

To return to Oppeln theatre case, it was above all the plight of Eastern Upper Silesia's ethnic Germans that, besides the legacy of the plebiscite era, was invoked as good reason to counteract the government's perceived indulgence of Polish activism. The *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, for one, railed that popular anger at the government's authorization of the performance was all the more justified considering that it was granted despite anti-German terror, which the refugees in the crowd had personal experience of, continuing to rage in Polish Upper Silesia.¹⁵⁶ This anti-German persecution Poland neither apologized for nor punished, so that Germany's one-sided propriety regarding the handling of nationalist violence was, in a different piece, held by the paper to amount to kow-towing before the "small predator state Poland."¹⁵⁷ On the occasion of the stink bomb throwers' trial, meanwhile, the *Tageszeitung* made the case that their righteous indignation at the authorities' permissiveness towards Polish propaganda, when all the while Germans in the lost territories suffered oppression, should

¹⁵⁶ "Die Folgen der polnischen Theateraufführung in Oppeln," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, April 30, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁵⁷ "dem kleinen Raubstaat Polen"; "Dr. Lukaschek an den polnischen Generalkonsult," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

have counted in their favor in court.¹⁵⁸ When it was the turn of the paper's editor to be tried for incitement, his attorney boldly argued that Eastern Upper Silesia's Germans, the negative consequences for whom of the unrest were so often stressed, did not in fact resent Knaak's incendiary journalism, nor the violence it was accused of having fomented. He read out a letter supposedly sent by a group of German families from Katowice to express their support for Knaak, which, echoing far-right demands for Germany not to disavow nationalist violence unless Poland did the same, demanded that the editor's trial be postponed until Poland in its turn brought murderers of German minority members to justice.¹⁵⁹ The Nazi party, for its part, argued not only against penalizing the instigators and perpetrators of the violence in Oppeln but outright continued to stand behind it. The above-quoted statement released by the party's Oppeln chapter concluded with the pronouncement that, "We will also in future take the view that the Germans in Eastern Upper Silesia are best served, if they have support of a self-confident Germandom in Western Upper Silesia," a brand of Germandom the rioters were evidently held to exemplify.¹⁶⁰ The communiqué also reiterated the demand of the flyer handed out on the day of the performance for the abandonment of the government's "politics of lacking *völkisch* pride, of petit bourgeois softening of the bones, and of political horse-trading," pursued in the mistaken hopes of securing the rights of Polish Upper Silesia's German minority.¹⁶¹ Real relief for the minority could, however, only be achieved through a strengthening of the German people and state, the pamphlet had contended. Concerns that violent German assertiveness might, to the contrary, adversely impact the German minority were repudiated. The Nazis' leaflet, foreseeing this

¹⁵⁸ "Das politische Urteil von Oppeln," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁵⁹ "Dr. Knaak freigesprochen!," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 12, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁶⁰ "Wir werden auch in Zukunft die Auffassung vertreten, daß den Deutschen in Ost-Oberschlesien am besten gedient ist, wenn sie an einem selbstbewussten Deutschtum in West-Oberschlesien einen starken Rückhalt haben.;" "Eine Erklärung der Nationalsozialisten," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁶¹ "diese Politik des mangelnden völkischen Stolzes, der spießbürgerlichen Knochenerweichung und des politischen Kuhhandels"; "Deutsche Volksgenossen!," August 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

objection, for example, asserted that a short-term exacerbation of the persecution the minority suffered regardless in the service of its future deliverance would not make it any less steadfast in its Germandom than it had been so far.¹⁶²

It was just such considerations for the German minority that republicans emphasized. They admitted that “infuriation about the continual attacks and rapes of the German minority through the League of Insurgents” was not just widespread but legitimate.¹⁶³ Violence, however, would only lead to “a new sedition [*Verhetzung*] on both sides,” aggravating that problem, they persisted.¹⁶⁴ Only a politics of mutual goodwill could secure continued privileges, like the operation of a German theatre in Katowice, for the German minority, the renowned *Vossische Zeitung* concurred.¹⁶⁵ That theatre, the Upper Silesian *Volksblatt* described, had been protested in response to the disturbance in Oppeln and banned from the use of the municipal theatre building.¹⁶⁶ Across Poland, a “general prohibition on all German theatre performances” had moreover been demanded, though the country had previously regularly welcomed German artists, including Thomas Mann, to great acclaim.¹⁶⁷ The aggression in Oppeln had upset a fragile but theretofore functional balance.

This dispute about how best to respond to nationalist violence in the borderlands given the oppression of Poland's Germans arose not only after the theatre riot. In August 1932, violence swept Silesia again. In reaction to this upsurge of violence, the free and Christian unions of Upper Silesia wrote to the Prussian minister of the interior, urging him to shore up Gleiwitz's police department and the powers of its president. This request they justified with the expectation that Eastern Upper Silesia's German minority

¹⁶² “Deutsche Volksgenossen!,” August 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁶³ “Erregung über die dauernden Angriffe und Vergewaltigungen der deutschen Minderheit durch den Aufständischenverband”; “Fort mit der Knüppelpolitik,” *Oppelner Kurier*, April 30, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁶⁴ “eine neue Verhetzung auf beiden Seiten”; *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ “Die Heldentat der Oppelner Nationalsozialisten,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁶⁷ “generelles Verbot für alle deutschen Theateraufführungen”; “Hakenkreuz-Rowdys in Oppeln,” *Oberschlesisches Volksblatt*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

would have to bear the consequences should Poles decide to retaliate for rampant Nazi anti-Polish terror.¹⁶⁸ During this time, the Potempa murder also sparked discussion about the relationship between German nationalist violence and the position of the German minority in Polish Upper Silesia. Nationalists claimed that minority members agreed that five death sentences for the death of a former insurgent constituted an overreaction.¹⁶⁹ However, the republican *Volksbote* printed a submission, reportedly sent in by a German from Polish Upper Silesia, that confronted this Nazi reasoning that someone like Pietrzuch had "no right to avail himself of the protection of the German state authority'," as the *Angriff* had phrased it.¹⁷⁰ For over a decade, he pointed out, Germans in Poland had contested their discrimination by avowing that, though they had in many cases fought or campaigned for Germany immediately after the war, they were now, after their defeat, loyal Polish citizens, who deserved to participate in public life and politics. If Germans, however, denied erstwhile insurgents like Pietrzuch such protections and opportunities, the German minority could not credibly demand them from Poles. The Nazis' rhetoric, he seethed, was naive and counterproductive.¹⁷¹ Violence, republicans all concurred, could not be allowed to become a nationalist tit-for-that, even as they struggled to check it.

Though the German government strove to appease Poland and therefore to rein in Nazis' extrajudicial violence against Polish activism and fellow citizens, it too believed in the threat of invasion by the neighboring country. Therefore, the diminished *Reichswehr* set up a volunteer *Grenzschutz* in the Eastern provinces, designed to supplement the regular troops in case of Polish attack. The relationship between these official border protection measures and the National Socialist movement became a matter of some consequence for both sides when the latter came to dominate the nationalist milieu in the

¹⁶⁸ "Oberschlesischer Notruf," *Oberschlesischer Volksbote*, August 6, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

¹⁶⁹ "Der Kampf gegen die Todesurteile," *Deutsche Zeitung*, August 24, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, St 18, Nr. 218.

¹⁷⁰ "Ein polnischer Insurgent, ein kommunistischer Hochverräter hat heute kein Recht, den Schutz deutscher Staatsautorität für sich zu beanspruchen."; "Er war nur ein Pole," *Volksblatt*, August 27, 1932. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 17.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

German East in the early 1930s. The two historians who have investigated the relations between the *Reichswehr* and the Nazis concerning border defense, Thilo Vogelsang and Richard Bessel, agree that these were smoothest in East Prussia, where the awareness of being an island cut off from the rest of Germany lent defense preparations added urgency.¹⁷² In other provinces, dealings were more ambivalent, with SA leaders displaying reluctance to permit their memberships to be placed under the command of non-Nazis but ordinary Nazis as individuals joined the *Grenzschutz* in significant numbers.¹⁷³ Bessel foregrounds this mass participation, arguing that, for all the concerns about command structure, the SA was eager to cooperate with the border protection units. Not only would anything else have drawn into question its nationalist bona fides in regions where the *Grenzschutz* enjoyed broad popular support, but involvement in the divisions also afforded SA members the opportunity to live out their military fantasies. The organization as a whole, meanwhile, could boost its respectability through collaboration within the *Grenzschutz* with the army and the established right.¹⁷⁴ Vogelsang, however, highlights that the SA's persistent equivocation about its willingness to cooperate with the army on border protection, despite its members' mass participation, contributed to increased willingness on the part of the federal government to take steps against the paramilitary in 1932. In March of that year, investigations had uncovered documents showing that the SA in Pomerania and the Border Province contemplated raiding the weapons' stores of the *Grenzschutz* for use in domestic political struggles and that the SA considered biding its time in case of Polish invasion, which would have fatally hampered the capabilities of divisions after all largely composed of SA men. Furthermore, Hitler had openly declared in a speech in Eastern Pomeranian

¹⁷² Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 68-69; Thilo Vogelsang, *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP. Beiträge zur deutschen Geschichte 1930-1932* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), 157-158.

¹⁷³ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 72-73; Vogelsang, *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP*, 158-159.

¹⁷⁴ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 67.

Lauenburg that the SA would not defend the borders until the republican system had ceased to exist. The publication of this material by the Prussian government some weeks later convinced even the reactionary Kurt von Schleicher to move against the SA.¹⁷⁵ While participation in the *Grenzschutz* did have all the advantages for the SA that Bessel enumerates, it is, as Vogelsang's account implies, worth taking the SA's reservations about cooperation seriously and to examine the idea that the Nazis put forward that their movement, with its mass base and militancy, offered Germany's borders the best protection.

The SA leadership's ambivalence toward the *Grenzschutz* is best documented in East Prussia, where for a brief period in early 1931 *Gauleiter* Erich Koch's doubts about the wisdom of permitting loyalties in SA men to any organization other than the party and about the trustworthiness of the new commander in chief of the army resulted in temporary bans on *Grenzschutz* membership. Police reports from Prostken, the Masurian border police's seat in Lyck county, reflect how changing directives played out on the ground. Initially, in early February 1931, it was announced at a meeting that the *Gau* had "warned of any agreements with the army or state authorities regarding *Grenzschutz* questions," out of distrust of general Kurt von Hammerstein, an opponent of the Nazis who had been involved in the *Fememord* prosecutions.¹⁷⁶ Membership in the state border protection units would, however, still be tolerated where it facilitated the military training of SA men or the discovery of arms depots. For the latter purpose, one local SA leader even established a reconnaissance patrol.¹⁷⁷ Overall, though, the enjoinder by the *Gau* to avoid cooperation with the *Grenzschutz* resulted in "a whole number of resignations from the official mobilization organizations."¹⁷⁸ The prohibition on participation in the

¹⁷⁵ Vogelsang, *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP*, 168-169.

¹⁷⁶ "Der Gau warnt vor irgendwelchen Abmachungen mit Reichswehr oder Staatsstellen bezgl. Grenzschutzfragen.;" "Betr. S.A. der NSDAP," February 4, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁷⁷ "Betr. S.A. der NSDAP," February 25, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁷⁸ "eine ganze Reihe von Austritten aus der amtlichen Mobilmachungsorganisation"; "Betr. S.A. der NSDAP," February 4, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

official defense initiative was reiterated at an SA assembly the following month,¹⁷⁹ but by mid-May it was reportedly overridden by an oral order that allowed SA members to once again take part in state-sponsored border protection.¹⁸⁰ The divisional chaplain for East Prussia, a particular advocate for the Nazis within the *Reichswehr*, had intervened and repaired relations.¹⁸¹ By the following month, training in official border protection units was considered imperative. It was “the holiest duty of the SA man to stand in the front-most line in the defense of the fatherland” against the “main enemy,” Poland, one speaker proclaimed at a rally in Allenstein, before urging all SA members between ages eighteen and forty-two to enroll for training in one of the branches of service of the *Grenzschutz*.¹⁸² Instruction, provided by *Reichswehr* officials, would begin on August 1 and sign-ups were taken immediately after the speech.¹⁸³ In August, some SA men in Lyck were ordered to attend a lecture on border protection questions by a major.¹⁸⁴ After that, the police only reported on the SA's links with the *Grenzschutz* again in March 1932, when a tally at one meeting yielded the result that fifty-two of the seventy-six SA members present had already completed a “*Grenzschutz* course.”¹⁸⁵ When the *Grenzschutz* “requested” thirty men from Lyck's SA around this time, the chapter could only supply seven who were not yet active therein anyway.¹⁸⁶ Two local SA leaders, the police learned the next month, were even considering leaving the SA in order to teach in the official border protection divisions.¹⁸⁷ Another enjoined that trained SA men should

¹⁷⁹ “Betr. S.A. der NSDAP,” March 6, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸⁰ “Betr. S.A. der NSDAP,” May 15, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸¹ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 69.

¹⁸² “Der Hauptfeind stehe jenseits der Grenzen [sic] und bedrohe Ostpreussen. Daher ist es Pflicht eines jeden Deutschen das Vaterland gegen die polnische Flut zu verteidigen. Insbesondere ist es die heiligste Pflicht eines S.A.Mannes [sic] bei der Verteidigung des Vaterlandes in der fordersten Linie zu stehen.”; “Betrifft: S.A. der N.S.D.A.P.,” June 28, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ “Betr. SA. der NSDAP,” August 20, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 4.

¹⁸⁵ “Grenzschutzkursus”; “Betr. SA. der NSDAP,” March 7, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸⁶ “angefordert”; “S. A. Appell des Sturmes 21 am 30.3.32.,” April 5, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸⁷ “Betr: S.A. Appell,” April 8, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

be incorporated immediately into the *Grenzschutz*, though he instructed them not to speak to the police, which was not to be trusted, should they be arrested in the course of their army activities.¹⁸⁸ Despite this resumption of good relations, the Nazi party still looked askance on the demands the *Grenzschutz* made on its members and their time. In November 1932, for example, Lyck's *Ortsgruppenleiter* felt it necessary to reprimand his flock that, "Attendance at membership meetings comes before all other meetings, also before the *Grenzschutz*."¹⁸⁹ He and his East Prussian colleagues were hardly alone in retaining a certain coolness towards the *Grenzschutz*. Both Bessel and Vogelsang mention that the SA leaderships of Pomerania and Silesia rejected placing their subordinates under a command other than their own. Even in the Border Province, where the relationship with the *Grenzschutz* was generally good,¹⁹⁰ SA chief Manthey called for the staffing of the organization with "'our leaders'," so as to preclude conflicts of loyalty.¹⁹¹ If this request were not honored, he stressed, the Nazi movement controlled sufficient manpower to handle border defense on its own.

Hitler articulated this Nazi reluctance to defend the borders of a republic his movement rejected in a controversial 1932 speech in Lauenburg. He reminded his listeners that, in the Nazi telling, already once before, in 1921 in Upper Silesia, his party comrades had been ready to defend the borders but had been betrayed by the republicans. Therefore, next time the Nazis would only protect the frontiers if the whole of Germany stood behind them. Hitler did not want to "sacrifice his fighters for the system" and would consequently not help safeguard the borders until "the sponsors of today's system

¹⁸⁸ "Betr. SA. der NSDAP," March 8, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 19.

¹⁸⁹ "Der Besuch der Mitgliederversammlungen geht vor allen anderen Veranstaltungen vor, auch vor dem Grenzschutz.;" "Betrifft: Mitgliederversammlung der NSDAP. Ortsgruppe Leck am Donnerstag, den 17.11.32," November 21, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 27.

¹⁹⁰ Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism*, 69-71.

¹⁹¹ "'unsere Führer'"; "Betrifft: Rede des Präsidenten der Landwirtschaftskammer für die Provinz Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen, Manthey über den Grenzschutz," February 3, 1933. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4555.

are destroyed."¹⁹² When Hitler came under fire for these pronouncements, he tried to backtrack by reiterating in speeches in Allenstein,¹⁹³ Lyck,¹⁹⁴ and Flensburg that it had, ostensibly, been the republicans who had abandoned the borders during the post-war struggles, while he had since mobilized thirteen million Germans, on whom the borderlands could count.¹⁹⁵ Other Nazi dignitaries, however, had earlier made similar statements. Silesian *Gauleiter* Helmuth Brückner, for one, in 1930 disparaged the army as costing more in its diminished state than it had before the war, all while it only served to uphold Germany's republican system of government rather than to preserve its borders.¹⁹⁶ The Nazis, for their part, Brückner pronounced in a different 1930 speech, had "signed up voluntarily and put our lives at stake for our German people and fatherland" a decade previously, unlike the republicans.¹⁹⁷ Now, "We will protect our borders from intruders, but only if the SPD marches in front of us, for otherwise we will receive the stab with the dagger from behind."¹⁹⁸ Fellow Upper Silesian Hüttmann professed at a December 1930 event that "today's system" was seeking Nazi assurances of help in border protection, but that Nazis' reply would be, "We will protect Prussia and Germany, but first away with the red government!"¹⁹⁹

It was not just the government, though, with which the NSDAP was reluctant to collaborate in defense matters. In the *Gau* Ostmark, which included the Border Province,

¹⁹² "daß er seine Kämpfer nicht für das System opfern wolle, sondern die Grenze erst dann schützen werde, wenn zuvor die Träger des heutigen Systems vernichtet seien"; "Hitler in Lauenburg," *General-Anzeiger*, April 6, 1932. APS, NPS, 39.

¹⁹³ *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen: Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, ed. Clemens Vollnhals, vol. 5 (München: K. G. Saur, 1998), 76-77.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁹⁵ "Adolf Hitler in Flensburg," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 25, 1932.

¹⁹⁶ "Bericht über die öffentliche Versammlung der NSDAP. am 11.4.1930 im Schloßrestaurant in Ratibor," April 15, 1930. APO, RO, 1805.

¹⁹⁷ "Als unsere Grenzen früher bedroht wurden, haben wir uns freiwillig gemeldet und unser Leben für unser deutsches Volk und Vaterland eingesetzt."; "Betrifft: Öffentliche Versammlung der N.S.D.A.P. in Hindenburg am 21.11.1930," December 15, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

¹⁹⁸ "Wir werden unsere Grenzen vor Eindringlingen schützen, aber nur dann, wenn die SPD. vor uns marschiert, denn sonst erhalten wir von hinten den Dolchstoß."; *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ "Wir sagen: 'Wir schützen Preußen und Deutschland, aber erst fort mit der roten Regierung!'" Report, December 6, 1930. APO, RO, 1806.

the *Stahlhelm* and the agrarian *Landbund* had initiated a so-called *Selbstschutz*, *Gauleiter* Wilhelm Kube informed the NSDAP's chief administrator Gregor Straßer in late 1931.²⁰⁰ Local *Stahlhelm* and *Landbund* leaders had pressed Nazis to join these new companies, which Straßer,²⁰¹ Kube,²⁰² and district leaders all prohibited.²⁰³ Technically, Straßer told Kube, the national SA directorate had permitted that SA men be active in "local *Selbstschutz* associations," but, Straßer contended, this authorization had been meant to apply only to short-term campaigns against concrete "attempts at plundering."²⁰⁴ Committing to longer-term involvement, in contrast, might lead to the energy invested in the *Selbstschutz* being lost to the Nazi party in "the great, decisive political battle."²⁰⁵ The SA had to remain at the party's unrestricted disposition, especially to defend against "Communist ventures."²⁰⁶ Where Nazis did participate in local *Selbstschutz* groups, local and district leaders should if nothing else be reminded, Straßer remarked, that these associations ought to be in the hands of the Nazi *Ortsgruppenleiter*. Only where there were very few Nazis could the leadership of the *Stahlhelm* or *Landbund* be accepted.²⁰⁷ Certainly, those two organizations could hardly expect to create border defense units and then to confront the NSDAP, as the largest party, with this *fait accompli*. If they wanted their participation, the Nazis should have been included in the planning and, by implication, in the distribution of responsible posts.²⁰⁸

Beyond all the grounds on which Nazis could not agree to join the *Selbstschutz* formations, Straßer did also present the SA as in itself sufficient alternative. The Nazi

²⁰⁰ Letter from Wilhelm Kube to Gregor Straßer, October 10, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰¹ Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 21, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰² Letter from Wilhelm Kube to Gregor Straßer, October 23, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰³ Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 19, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰⁴ "örtlichen Selbstschutzverbänden," "Plünderungsversuche"; Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 21, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰⁵ "den großen politischen Ent[scheidungskampf]"; Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 19, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰⁶ "kommunistischen Unternehmungen"; Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 21, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Letter from Gregor Straßer to Wilhelm Kube, October 19, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

paramilitary was, he wrote to Kube, the best *Selbstschutz*, having proven its efficaciousness in the fight against the Communists. It furthermore already had in place the infrastructure necessary for an effective border defense, for purely local companies, like the ones organized by *Stahlhelm* and *Landbund*, would be no use if localities were invaded. Reinforcements would have to come to their aid from outside and the SA provided a framework for such assistance.²⁰⁹ Similar portrayals of the Nazi movement as in any case the borders' best guardian cropped up again and again. A 1932 news article titled "SA as *Grenzschutz*" in the *Preußische Zeitung*, for instance, maintained that Germans, located in the heart of Europe and wedged between countries hostile to it, had always been warriors. This warlike character, the paper avouched, remained preserved in the SA now that the German army's size had been constricted and Germans were being trained, against their nature, to be peace-loving. In this spirit of perpetuating Germans' martial nature, border protection exercises of the Masurian SA had taken place under the direction of former general Litzmann, inspiring pride in the participants that they numbered among those upon whom Germany could count in case of danger.²¹⁰ That the Nazi party was ostensibly "An army, on which East Prussia too can rely"²¹¹ and that "stands in the first line behind the boundaries of the *Reich*" was underlined by Hitler too in the aftermath of his contentious speech in Lauenburg.²¹² A local Nazi speaker in Masuria, meanwhile, vociferated that, "The NSDAP will understand to defend the country against a possible attack. He who attacks Germany will perish."²¹³ A fellow Masurian likewise blustered that "'the Polish pigs' or 'lice-ridden Pollacks' ... want to

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ "SA als Grenzschutz," *Preußische Zeitung*, December 17/18, 1932. MOB.

²¹¹ "eine Armee, auf die sich auch Ostpreußen verlassen kann"; *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen: Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, ed. Clemens Vollnhals, vol. 5 (München: K. G. Saur, 1998), 77.

²¹² "in erster Linie hinter der Gemarkung des Reiches"; "Adolf Hitler in Flensburg," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 25, 1930.

²¹³ "Die NSDAP. werden [sic] es schon verstehen, das Land gegen einen evt&. [sic] Angriff zu verteidigen. Wer Deutschland angreift, geht dabei mit zu Grunde."; "Betr. Öffentliche Versammlung der NSDAP. Ortsgruppe Prosten," July 25, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 27.

have something, then they should just come. The SA stands ready and will then come marching from the South and West.”²¹⁴

The government was accused of failing to foster comparable potency and a mass character in its border protection units. When right-wing groups in 1930 repeatedly held demonstrations protesting the anti-German terror that had swept Eastern Upper Silesia during the recent election season there, one recurrent Nazi demand was, “The immediate protection of the Eastern border and the deployment of an armed *Grenzschutz*.”²¹⁵ In support of this request as well as of appeals to terminate trade relations with Poland and to exclude Poles from state employment, the party's Ratibor branch collected roughly 8,000 signatures in November 1930.²¹⁶ A month later, Ratibor's Nazis hosted a protest march in parallel to a more sizeable one orchestrated by the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, because the latter event's line-up of speakers did not include a Nazi. The call to establish an armed *Grenzschutz* appeared on the banners carried by the 2,000-strong crowd, alongside denigrations of an ostensibly hypocritical government that was speaking out now against the terrorizing of Eastern Upper Silesia's Germans but that had earlier signed the shameful treaties of Versailles and Locarno.²¹⁷ During the keynote speech, Josef Adamczyk, then a Nazi city councilor in Ratibor, began by arguing that the republican parties, whose politicians had, like the Center's Carl Ulitzka, allegedly stabbed the *Selbstschutz* in the back in 1921 or, like Social Democracy's Arthur Crispian, professed to know no fatherland called Germany, had disqualified themselves from suddenly "grandstanding" against Polish terror.²¹⁸ The government should, Adamczyk

²¹⁴ “‘die polnischen Schweine’ oder ‘verlausten Pollacken’ etwas haben wollen, dann sollen sie nur kommen. Die SA. steht bereit und wird dann von Süden und Westen anmarschiert kommen.”; Report, May 26, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 3.

²¹⁵ “Den sofortigen Schutz der Ostgrenze und die Aufstellung eines bewaffneten Grenzschutzes”; “Betrifft: Protest-EntschlieÙung,” November 29, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

²¹⁶ “Den sofortigen Schutz der Ostgrenze und die Aufstellung eines bewaffneten Grenzschutzes”; Ibid.

²¹⁷ “‘Wir fordern sofortigen Schutz der Grenze und Aufstellung eines Grenzschutzes’.”; “Betrifft: Öffentliche Protestkundgebung gegen die polnischen Terrorakte, veranstaltet von der Ortsgruppe Ratibor der NSDAP,” December 10, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

²¹⁸ “maulfechten”; Ibid.

went on, create a *Grenzschutz*, but, he acknowledged, it would balk at doing so, since it was bound not to enjoy the support of such an organization.²¹⁹ As a government-sponsored *Grenzschutz* did already exist, it appears that what Nazis were more specifically seeking was a border protection force that would be a standing, professional body rather than a mere reserve. This supposition is lent credence by the Nazi *Reichstag* faction's introduction of a motion, also in late 1930, that proposed the twin alleviation of border and economic insecurity through the formation of a *Grenzschutz* along the Polish border out of at least a 100,000 members of Germany's "millions-strong army of the male unemployed."²²⁰

As usual, there was more bluster than substance behind the Nazi rhetoric on border defense. The *Reichstag* bill went nowhere and beyond occasional drills like that with Litzmann, there seems to have been no preparation for deploying the SA for the borders' protection. The only semblance of a plan was issued by Ernst Röhm in mid-January 1932, when a survey of the SA's constituent districts found precisely that a unified understanding of the paramilitary's *Grenzschutz* tasks was lacking. Fundamentally, however, Röhm was only concerned with the scenario of a Nazi take-over of power, in which case the movement of German Marxists out of and foreign Marxist couriers into the country was to be prevented. The SA's task would be limited to supplementing the efforts of the army and customs service to monitor train, automobile, and plane traffic near the borders and to patrol the hinterland off the major roads there. It was not even the main part of the SA but only the SA reserves that were to be utilized for these purposes and planning for these tasks continued to be left to the individual SA districts.²²¹ Despite this desultory approach to border protection, both Nazis and Poles depicted what trainings took place as far more formidable than they were. The

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ "Millionenheer der männlichen Arbeitslosen"; "Nationalsozialisten fordern Grenzschutz-Ost," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, November 27, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

²²¹ Decree, January 15, 1932. APO, RO, 1805.

aforementioned article "SA as *Grenzschutz*," for instance, read like an account of a real battle, so much did it stress the realism and grand scope of the event. In Upper Silesia, meanwhile, Polish papers in September 1931 insisted that the local SA was engaging in large-scale border protection drills. While the *Kurier Codzienny* asserted that the SA held "veritable military exercises" near Beuthen, Ratibor, and Gleiwitz, often within sight of Polish villages across the border,²²² the *Polska Zachodnia* alleged that Nazi units of thirty men each were being housed in villages bordering Poland's Rybnik district, where they held extensive military-style exercises.²²³ Such accounts were, however, not confirmed by government investigations and, as one official report pointed out, groups of tens of armed men would have been difficult to conceal.²²⁴ Beyond a basic but consistent emphasis by the *Gau* leaderships on the value of maintaining SA branches immediately along the borders, Nazis' border defense activities were thus erratic, highly local, and poorly organized.²²⁵ Nevertheless, Nazis' at least professed belief in their movement as the most efficacious border protection was one justification provided for their ambivalent stance towards joining with others in *Grenzschutz* efforts, a risky one in regions where such efforts enjoyed practically unanimous support.

This popular backing of *Grenzschutz* efforts was rooted in fear of Polish invasion. Anxieties about more subtle forms of Polish encroachment on the borderlands' Germandom paired with resentment at the perceived post-war inversion of the ethnic hierarchy, accompanied by considerable territorial losses in the East for Germany, drove the less formal nationalist violence routinely perpetrated by the Nazis in the border regions. Such violence was clustered in election seasons in particular, but also often greeted cultural activism and day-to-day expressions of Polish identity. Even shared

²²² "regelrechte militärische Übungen"; "Die Hitlerleute halten an der polnischen Grenze Manöver ab" (translation), *Kurier Codzienny*, September 17, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

²²³ "Das schlesische Grenzland ist ein Gebiet steter Provokation der deutschen Revancheorganisationen" (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, September 17, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

²²⁴ Report, October 13, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

²²⁵ "Betrifft: Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Annaberg der NSDAP. am 12.3.1930 im Lokal bei Hartmann," March 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1800; "Betr. N.S.D.A.P.," March 12, 1930. LSH, Abt. 301 Nr. 4557.

wariness of Poland, however, could not persuade the Nazis, at least at the leadership level, to commit reliably to cooperation with the government or with other right-wing groups. This denigration of the government's and rival organizations' conducting of borderland matters will be further explored in the next chapter.

Nazis, Nationalists, and State Authority

The Nazis' well-known contempt for the state and federal governments had, as the preceding chapter has begun to illuminate, dimensions specific to the borderlands. In particular, the authorities were castigated for their perceived permissiveness towards minority nationalities internally and rival countries externally. Minorities' supposedly pernicious activities were allowed to run unchecked, while neighboring states' demands were acceded to and permitted to shape official policies and actions. Instead of this disgraceful meekness, the Nazis promised, a future government headed by them would resolve the border and minority issues through forcefulness. In order to underscore the gulf between the assertiveness Nazism offered to implement and the obsequious approach of the current government, Nazi delegates in the German and Prussian parliaments time and again introduced bills proposing drastic measures to contain the threat emanating from minorities and neighboring states. Except in that Hitler was acclaimed as a particularly able and resolute defender of the borderlands, with a special connection to them due to his Austrian heritage, Nazi critiques of the authorities, boasts of greater firmness, and methods of expressing them differed little from those of the movement's longer-established far-right rivals. This likeness of outlook and strategy engendered mutual sympathy, cooperation, and side-by-side participation in the *Grenzschutz*, particularly at the grassroots level and in the press. Far-right groups' higher echelons, however, did occasionally treat the Nazis with coolness as that movement began to rapidly outstrip theirs, while the Nazis in their turn every so often charged that the established right prioritized catering to landowners' economic interests over safeguarding border regions' Germandom. These criticisms of one another never dominated relations, though. Republicans, for their part, rejected the disparagements of their handling of the nationality struggle and instead stressed that especially in the borderlands it was important for authority not to slip away from the government into the hands of violent bands. In order to avert such an outcome and the outcries from neighboring countries that

so often accompanied anti-minority excesses, the government endeavored to prevent or punish violence. It also continued to submit to the rules and processes of international bodies. Besides the convinced democrats who upheld such policies, however, the civil service at the local level in particular also contained many who had much greater sympathy for their nationalist compatriots than for the minorities whom they were enjoined to protect. Some officials, notably ones employed in the customs service, even joined the Nazi party, to their superiors' considerable consternation. These sympathies for the Nazis and their approach on the part of civil servants complicated the government's efforts to stem a violent tide that jeopardized sensible nationality politics. The fraught, complex relationship between the Nazi movement and the government on the one hand and the established right on the other will be examined here in its borderlands-specific iteration.

The federal government, for one, was routinely accused in Nazi speeches and articles of failing to take a stand for Germany's rights and aims in the nationality struggle. Whereas Poland in particular like an ill-mannered child made a fuss and thereby got what it wanted, Upper Silesian speaker Filusch charged in 1929, the German government, personified by foreign minister Stresemann, was incapable of simply "banging its fist on the table" and asserting itself.¹ Such complaisance was, Filusch sneered, "not decent for a German man," but encouraged by the international system within which the government was mistakenly striving for acceptance.² In the wake of a 1932 League of Nations summit, Hitler himself ridiculed chancellor Brüning for "defending the Eastern territories with speeches in Königsberg," when he should have done so in Geneva.³ There, however, "prudence, restraint, caution, tactics" had been Brüning's watchwords.⁴ Instead of turning to the League, one local Nazi functionary in a similar vein proclaimed at an election rally

¹ "mit der Faust auf den Tisch zu hauen"; Report, June 21, 1929. APO, RO, 1800.

² "nicht fein für einen deutschen Mann"; Ibid.

³ "Herr Brüning verteidigt heute die Ostgebiete mit Reden in Königsberg."; "Es kommt darauf an, wer hinter den Grenzen steht," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 7, 1932. KSI.

⁴ "Klugheit, Zurückhaltung, Vorsicht, Taktik"; Ibid.

in Schneidemühl in 1932, Germany should "sharply oppose" Lithuania and Poland head-on.⁵ Instead, Germany was giving up things it had a right to, just in order to keep its neighbors happy. In 1932, for example, Wilhelm Sievers, the Nazi mayor of Eckernförde, had arranged for the North German public radio station to broadcast the *Grenzlandfeier* held there on the first evening of the annual convention of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner Bund*. The Danish state broadcasting agency protested, however, citing an agreement that neither country's radio stations would disseminate border-related propaganda, and the German authorities in response rushed to give assurances that they would look into the matter. Instead of doing so, Nazi critics said, they should have stood up for Germany's right to transmit the event, especially as Danish stations routinely transmitted Danish ministers' border propaganda.⁶ Worse yet, the government had permitted Poland to cancel a three-million-mark debt that it supposedly owed as compensation for the Upper Silesian uprisings, Filusch charged, presumably in order to foster detente with that country.⁷ What proposals the government did make for the retention of influence in lost territories was derided as insufficient. In 1932 the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* printed a supposed submission from a reader from North Schleswig, who claimed to have been involved in the negotiation of the German-Danish border in 1920. The Tiedje line, which would have included in Germany a largely German strip of a few kilometers' width north of the current border, had only been a compromise put forward at a time at which Germany could hope for nothing better, he disclosed. Yet it was only that Tiedje line that republicans now demanded, though Germany should, he argued, lay claim to Schleswig all the way up to the Kongeå river. A border revision to this effect would only be accomplished though, he asserted, if Nazism came to power. The *Tageszeitung* praised the piece as "German language," which "holds water," unlike proposals, presumably by

⁵ "scharf entgegentreten"; copy of a report, April 25, 1932. APP, NPP, 169.

⁶ "Grenzlandfragen sollen nicht erörtert werden," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, August 31, 1932. SHLB.

⁷ "Betrifft: Versammlung der NSDAP. Ortsgruppe Oppeln, am 26. April 1930," April 28, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

the government, for the "creation of a Memel area" or a "special status for the 'borderland'." ⁸ When foreign minister Curtius in 1931 reportedly did acknowledge at a League of Nations' conference that Germany hoped for a revision of the borders, this was used to derisively highlight the contrast with the government's usual spineless position. ⁹

In fact, the government behaved so accommodatingly toward rival nations and their foreign backers that it was on the brink of abandoning the border regions to the former, Nazis maintained. Masurian *Gaukommissar* Martini, for instance, gave a speech at an SA rally in Lötzen in 1931 that amounted to a tirade against the government. The republic, he argued, had long failed Masuria by, among other things, signing the peace treaties, treating East Prussia "as a stepchild," ¹⁰ and watching the economic situation worsen, with its *Osthilfe* reaching not native Masurians but "Galician," which was shorthand for Jewish, "profiteers." ¹¹ Now, Martini feared, the government was poised to sell out Masuria "like a flock of lambs" to Poland for a "despicable traitor's reward." ¹² All previous insults, Masuria had borne, but, Martini declared, "In two areas we Masurians won't tolerate any interference: we won't let our *Heimat* be taken from us, and nor will we have the faith of our fathers ripped out of our hearts." ¹³ Making himself plainer still, Martini added, "He who extends his hand [against us] henceforth will learn: 'Distress knows no command but: Kill! kill!' We loyally German Masurians refuse to become Pollacks, we Protestant Masurians will not let ourselves – neither in good nor in

⁸ "Das ist deutsche Sprache und hat Hand und Fuß. Davor verblaßt der Unsinn einer Memelgebietschaffung und einer Sonderstellung des 'Grenzlandes'."; "Ein Notschrei aus Nordschleswig," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, August 16, 1932. SHLB.

⁹ "Um deutschen Lebensraum im Osten - Die Forderungen des Heimatbundes Ostpreußen," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 5, 1931. MOB.

¹⁰ "als Stiefkind"; "Ansprache beim SA.-Aufmarsch auf dem Marktplatz in Lötzen, am 28. Juni 1931." GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 37d.

¹¹ "galizische Schieber"; Ibid.

¹² "wie eine Hammelherde an Polen zu verschachern gegen schnöden Judaslohn"; Ibid.

¹³ "An zwei Dingen lassen wir Masuren nicht rühren: unsere Heimat lassen wir uns nicht nehmen, den Glauben unserer Väter lassen wir uns nicht aus dem Herzen reißen."; Ibid.

evil – be led back into the lap of the Church that alone can bring salvation.”¹⁴ What international rapprochement meant for irredentism was exemplified, Nazis averred, by the treaty of Locarno, in which the government had ratified the Western borders. Fear of a so-called eastern Locarno was consequently fanned. As the speaker at a 1931 rally in Masurian Lyck exclaimed, “What an Eastern Locarno [*Ostlocarno*] means every German must know, namely the recognition of the current borders and even further, maybe the systematic relinquishing of East Prussia to Poland.”¹⁵ Even when there was a concrete diplomatic risk to the preservation at least of Germany's current borders, the government, it was alleged, failed to act. In a 1929 speech, East Prussian *Gauleiter* Koch claimed that federal authorities had been aware of a Polish memorandum to France, in which Poland offered to take on some of Germany's debts and to abstain from objecting to an Austrian merger with the *Reich* if it were granted East Prussia and Danzig. Despite being conscious of this insult to German sovereignty, the government had done nothing, nor had it alerted the German people.¹⁶

A Nazi government would be a different, “go-getting government,” Nazi propaganda affirmed.¹⁷ “[T]hrough National Socialism,” the *Preußische Zeitung* maintained, “the German people must find its way to our, national might, which will and must no longer take much time, so that our international demands will be lent the necessary forcefulness.”¹⁸ Accusations of lacking assertiveness on the current

¹⁴ “Wer seine Hand darnach ausstreckt, der wird es erfahren: ‘Not kennt kein Gebot als das:/Schlag tot!, schlag tot!’ Wir treudeutschen Masuren weigern uns, Pollacken zu werden, wir protestantischen Masuren lassen uns nicht - im Guten nicht und nicht im Bösen - in den Schoß der allein seligmachenden Kirche zurückführen.”; *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “Was Ostlocarno bedeutet, müsste ein jeder Deutsche wissen, nämlich die Anerkennung der jetzigen Grenzen und noch mehr, vielleicht systematisches Abtreten Ostpreußens ans Polen.”; Bericht Nr. 1592/31 der Kriminal- und Grenzdienststelle, July 10, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 4.

¹⁶ “Tilsit: Unsere Young-Versammlung in neutralem Urteil Bericht der Tilsiter Zeitung,” *Ostpreußischer Beobachter*, September 29, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 95e.

¹⁷ “tatkraftige Regierung”; Report, June 10, 1929. APO, RO, 1800.

¹⁸ “...daß das deutsche Volk durch den Nationalsozialismus seinen Weg zu unserer, nationaler [sic] Macht finden muß, was keine lange Zeit mehr dauern wird und darf, damit unseren internationalen Forderungen der nötige Nachdruck verliehen werden kann.”; “Agrarrecht und Minderheitenrecht in Polen,” *Preußische Zeitung*, February 6, 1931. MOB.

government's part were often followed up with declarations that a Nazi government would do better. A different piece in the *Preußische Zeitung*, for example, told of chicaneries against Memel's Germans, of which the German ministry of foreign affairs knew but which it had done nothing about. "We in any case do not expect this foreign ministry to take steps," the newspaper jibed, "We will get even [with the Lithuanians] one day!"¹⁹ On another occasion, the paper reported on demands voiced at a rally in Poland, hosted by an organization that enjoyed the support of Polish strongman Piłsudski, for the Polish borders to be extended to the Oder river. Such comments, it urged, had to be met with a German foreign policy that ensured not only that no further land would be severed from Germany but also that the lost territories would be reconquered. "Of course, a government like today's will never be able to realize such aims," the article concluded, "for that men are necessary like those that a Third Reich under the leadership of Adolf Hitler will once provide."²⁰ At a thousand-strong rally in Gleiwitz, a speaker from Breslau in a similar vein denounced "the measures of the former *Reich* government [during the fight against the insurgency] and the minority and foreign policies of the current Reich government" and boasted that the Nazis would make undone the loss of Upper Silesia, incurred by the republic's ineffectuality, though this would only be possible if the Social Democratic and Center parties were eliminated first.²¹

This greater Nazi assertiveness Poland had or would learn to fear, it was contended. When a native of Masurian Neidenburg wrote to the nationally renowned *Vossische Zeitung* to lament that Hitler had done so well there in the 1932 presidential

¹⁹ "Von diesem A.A. erwarten wir auch keine Schritte. Wir werden eines Tages abrechnen!"; "Litauen macht sich breit im Memelgebiet," *Preußische Zeitung*, March 19, 1931. MOB.

²⁰ "Freilich, eine Staatsführung wie die heutige wird solche Ziele nie verwirklichen können, dazu sind Männer vonnöten, wie sie das Dritte Reich unter Führung Adolf Hitlers einst stellen wird."; "Der Vernichtungskampf gegen das Deutschtum in Oberschlesien," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 29, 1931. MOB.

²¹ "die Massnahmen der damaligen Reichsregierung und die Minderheiten- und Aussenpolitik der jetzigen Reichsregierung"; "Betrifft: Polizeiliche Auflösung einer öffentlichen Versammlung der NSDAP. in Gleiwitz am 25. März 1931 wegen Duldung von Verstößen gegen das Republikenschutzgesetz," April 14, 1931. APO, RO, 1804.

election even though it was his opponent Hindenburg who had masterminded the Battle of Tannenberg, which had freed the region from Russian invasion, a Silesian wrote to Neidenburg's NSDAP chapter in order to refute this logic, hoping that his letter would be passed on to the author of the piece in the *Vossische*. Far from being perverse, he asserted, the election result demonstrated “that one has recognized sharply in our most important border area what is necessary to assert oneself.”²² Whereas “today’s compliancy and wimpishness” were bringing Germany and its borderlands only disadvantages,²³ “malicious neighbors will be more vigilant against a determined Germany.”²⁴ In fact, the *Preußische Zeitung* wrote, Poland already feared Hitler and his supporters. “Poland knows well,” it posited, “who alone in Germany has understood Eastern matters correctly and acts accordingly.”²⁵ It was for that reason that Polish newspaper railed against the Nazis almost daily, that it trembled at every German election, and that a “public ‘burning of Hitler’” had allegedly taken place on Torun’s main square.²⁶ It was in a future Nazi government that any hope of resolving Germany’s international situation advantageously supposedly rested.

The German government was considered not only to be rendering the country the “plaything of nations” internationally, however, but also to be dealing with the minorities within Germany in a lax fashion.²⁷ According to Upper Silesian Nazi speaker Hüttmann, “the German government in Berlin is sleeping and hears and sees nothing that happens in Upper Silesia.”²⁸ Therefore, Hüttmann recounted, Nazi *Reichstag* deputy Filusch had

²² “Das beweist, daß man in unserem wichtigsten Grenzgebiet scharf erkannt hat, was notwendig ist, um sich zu behaupten.”; Letter to the NSDAP chapter in Neidenburg, March 19, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 64a.

²³ “die heutige Nachgiebigkeit und Weichlichkeit”; Ibid.

²⁴ “denn vor einem entschlossenen Deutschland werden sich die böswilligen Nachbarn anders hüten”; Ibid.

²⁵ “Polen weiß genau, wer allein in Deutschland die Ostfragen richtig erkannt hat und darnach handelt.”; “Das ist die polnische Seele...,” *Preußische Zeitung*, December 22, 1932. MOB.

²⁶ “öffentliche ‘Verbrennung Hitlers’”; Ibid.

²⁷ “Spielball der Völker”; “Der Kampf um Nordschleswig,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, May 4, 1930. SHLB.

²⁸ “Hüttmann streifte auch die Minderheitenfrage und erklärte, daß die deutsche Regierung in Berlin schlief und nichts höre und sehe, was in Oberschlesien vorgehe.”; “Betrifft: Polizeiliche Auflösung einer

remarked to interior minister Joseph Wirth, “No, my dear Mr. Wirth, we understand it completely. When it is about the interests of the German people, then you lot cannot do anything....”²⁹ It was only when the interests of the German elite or the republic's foreign policy were at risk that the government intervened, Hüttmann charged, not when *völkisch* concerns were at stake. One specific, oft-criticized manifestation of the government's permissiveness was its "forbearance," as the Border Province's *Reichstag* deputy Siegfried Kasche put it, towards minority schools.³⁰ In Flatow, for instance, a local Nazi speaker alleged that his district's inspector of schools did not know Polish and hence could not accurately ascertain the spirit in which minority schools were raising their charges. For this failure of oversight, the speaker contended, the inspector had been awarded honorary membership in the Polish minority, which thanks to it could continue its nefarious activities unhindered.³¹ In East Prussia, meanwhile, *Oberpräsident* Siehr and two regional education officials partook in a check-up on a minority school located in the strip of West Prussia that had been allocated to East Prussia after the war. One of the regional functionaries had joined in the use of Polish when the children's progress in their native language was tested and Siehr had thanked the headmaster for his efforts, wishing the school "a favorable development and the accomplishment of the goal, which it has set for itself."³² Since minority schools' presumed aim was to prepare the incorporation of border regions into Poland, Siehr's congratulations were decried as traitorous, even though he tried to pacify the nationalist opposition by reassuring them that his comments had just been injudicious polite commonplaces. His resignation and replacement with someone who would handle the Polish schools with the proper toughness, presumably a

öffentlichen Versammlung der N.S.D.A.P. in Beuthen O/S. am 22. Januar 1931 wegen Duldung von Verstößen gegen das Republikenschutzgesetz," February 5, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

²⁹ "Nein, mein Herr Wirth, wir verstehen das vollkommen. Wenn es sich um die Belange des deutschen Volkes handelt, da könnt Ihr nichts unternehmen."; Ibid.

³⁰ "Duldsamkeit"; copy of a report, April 25, 1932. APP, NPP, 169.

³¹ Report, March 10, 1931. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 275.

³² "eine günstige Entwicklung [sic] sowie die Erreichung des Zieles, das sie sich gesteckt haben"; "Siehr auf Abwegen: Oberpräsident beglückwünscht polnische Schule," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 18, 1931. MOB.

Nazi, was called for. In Schleswig-Holstein too the Nazi movement took exception to the Danish schools established in Schleswig³³ and Flensburg.³⁴

On other issues too, the authorities were considered too trusting or obliging. Polish pilots who landed in Germany, supposedly because they had gotten lost, were taken at their word and let go time after time, even though the right suspected that they were compiling aerial photographs of border provinces.³⁵ Similarly, the Social Democratic police chief of Upper Silesian Gleiwitz had denied that a buttressed gravel pit and earthworks behind a supposed carp pond constituted a danger in the case of a military confrontation with Poland, as Nazis had warned. An official military inspection of the structures had, however, come to the conclusion that they might in fact be a hazard in case of war and resulted in a directive for them to be levelled, proving the Nazis right, as they boasted.³⁶ Equally controversially, authorities tolerated Polish propaganda and its promulgators. In 1932, for instance, the sale of land in Bütow county through the Settlement Commission to a supposed Polish agitator, with ties to other well-known Polish activists, was not just approved but rushed through by the Prussian minister for agriculture, despite the resistance of the affected municipality.³⁷ Such surrender of German land to Poles should, the Nazi *Pommersche Zeitung* demanded, be punished as treason and the minister relieved of the right to interfere in settlement decisions.³⁸ The *Landrat* of the Border Province's Flatow district was similarly held to be sabotaging the German cause, because priest and prominent Polish nationalist activist Domanski

³³ Letter from Pastor Schmidt-Wodder to Zachi, January 12, 1932. LSH, Abt. 399.71 Nr. 122.

³⁴ "Bomben auf Eckernförde!," [*Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung/Kieler Zeitung*], [September 3, 1932]. LSH, Abt. 399.105 Nr. 71.

³⁵ "Polnische Spionage - Wieder ein polnisches Flugzeug über Johannisburg," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 12, 1932. MOB; "Die polnische Provokation in Oppeln - Die polnischen Flieger werden verhört," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 12, 1932. MOB; "Die polnische Presse zum Zwischenfall in Oppeln," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 13, 1932. MOB; "Die polnischen Flieger," *Pommersche Zeitung*, August 4, 1932. KP.

³⁶ "Polnische Befestigungen auf deutschem Boden," *Pommersche Zeitung*, August 13, 1932. KP.

³⁷ "Preußen siedelt Polen an!," *Pommersche Zeitung*, [July 1932]. KP.

³⁸ "Polen siedeln im deutschen Grenzkreis," *Pommersche Zeitung*, July 10, 1932. KP.

reportedly enjoyed his special protection.³⁹ Due to this privileged position, Domanski and the Poles he led could act as "lord and master" in the district, a circumstance that was claimed to have provoked the Nazi attack on Polish residents of Glumen at that village's fire brigade festival.⁴⁰ In the wake of that episode, the "negligent authorities" had arrested the SA men, who were portrayed as having merely defended themselves against an ostensible Polish assault, and failed to take the Poles' personal details, such that they, when they did supposedly come under suspicion by the investigating officials, could not be found and taken into custody.⁴¹ In Upper Silesian Markowitz, meanwhile, a Pole had himself ascended to a responsible position when he was confirmed by Severing as chairman of the local council. This ratification of his election had occurred even though he, according to Josef Adamczyk's accusations, had held election rallies and agitated against Germanism in Polish Upper Silesia in the run-up to elections there in the pay of the Polish state.⁴² Day-to-day Polish campaigning too was accepted by the authorities. In Masuria, for example, Polish activists were claimed to be knocking on doors distributing Polish literature and keeping lists about the national convictions of those visited. The *Preußische Zeitung* called this tactic out as "presumptuousness" and asked rhetorically how long the government intended to continue tolerating it.⁴³ Even the exaggeration and occasional invention of reports of harassment of Poles during German election seasons were not counteracted. While the propaganda of the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier* was prohibited, the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* remarked, the dramatizations of the Polish press were not, as that, the paper sneered, "could harm

³⁹ "Der Polackenüberfall auf unsere S.A.," *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 21/22, 1932. CUL.

⁴⁰ "Herrscher und Gebieter"; Ibid.

⁴¹ "die nachlässigen Behörden"; "SA. in Notwehr gegen Polen," *Pommersche Zeitung*, August 20, 1932. KP.

⁴² "Betrifft: Öffentliche Protestkundgebung gegen die polnischen Terrorakte, veranstaltet von der Ortsgruppe Ratibor der NSDAP," December 10, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

⁴³ "Polnische Wühlarbeit: Wie lange duldet die Regierung die polnische Anmaßung?," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 21, 1932. MOB.

German-Polish rapprochement!"⁴⁴ The Nazi *Schlesischer Adler* likewise maligned the government's failure to silence the minority's inflated complaints of terror.⁴⁵ This acquiescence to Polish propaganda was just one more symptom of the government's discreditable lenience towards the minorities.

The government's supposed pusillanimity towards Poles and Poland came under particular fire, as touched on in the previous chapter, in the aftermath of the riots that greeted a Polish theatre troupe's performance of the Polish opera *Halka* in Oppeln in 1929. Responsibility for the unrest was attributed to the government's authorization of the event, which contrasted with the anti-German policies that reportedly obtained in Poland. "We see the persecution of Germandom in Eastern Upper Silesia, Posen, and Pomerania," the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* editorialized, "and cannot understand that the German government does not stand up more strongly for the oppressed, that it to the contrary abets Polish propaganda in the part of the Eastern marches that remains German."⁴⁶ If future disturbances were to be avoided, the journal reiterated elsewhere, Germans demanded of their government not only that it support the German minorities in Poland in the face of anti-German terror there but also that it take measures for the "protection of the German character in Western Upper Silesia."⁴⁷ Government assurances to Poland that violence like that in Oppeln would not occur anew were likewise denounced, for they implied, a far from penitent *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* maintained, that Polish actors might be invited to perform in border areas in future again. If such renewed invitations

⁴⁴ "das könnte ja der deutsch-polnischen Verständigung Abbruch tun!"; "Die polnischen Terrormärchen hören nicht auf," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 20, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁴⁵ "Nun aber Schluß mit den polnischen Provokationen in OS.," *Schlesischer Adler*, May 3, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁴⁶ "Wir sehen in Ostoberschlesien, in Posen und Pommerellen die Verfolgung des Deutschtums und können nicht verstehen, daß das deutsche Mutterland nicht stärker für die Unterdrückten eintritt, daß es im Gegenteil der polnischen Propaganda im deutschgebliebenen Teil der Ostmark Vorschub leistet.;" "Das politische Urteil von Oppeln," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

⁴⁷ "Schutz des deutschen Wesens in Westoberschlesien"; Ibid.

were issued, the paper warned, the government with its servility should be prepared to lose its mandate at the next election.⁴⁸

The Nazis strove to present themselves as the electoral alternative toughest on the minorities through speeches and articles but also through interpellations and policy proposals submitted by their delegates to the parliaments. Their 1930 *Reichstag* bill urging the formation of a 100,000-strong, standing *Grenzschutz* out of the "millions-strong army of the male unemployed" has already been mentioned in the previous chapter.⁴⁹ In a similar call for improved border protection, the Diet delegate Heukeshoven in a 1932 speech to the newly founded Working Group of National Socialist Police Officials in Upper Silesian Gleiwitz pressed for the town's police chief to be replaced with a Nazi one. Under the incumbent, the police force had, he charged, been sapped of the "requisite nationalism" to be "the vanguard of a great people's army" in case of a conflict with Poland.⁵⁰ In a more cultural vein, the Prussian Diet's Nazis submitted a motion that sought to guarantee borderlands Germans "'equal rights'" in the supposedly Polonophile Catholic church, to end putative clerical anti-German agitation, and to shield German children from it.⁵¹ Prussia's detested minority schools, meanwhile, should be closed, another interpellation, probably from 1929, recommended, and all autochthonous teachers and other civil servants in bilingual regions dismissed.⁵² Since the report mentioning this drastic proposition came from the *Cech*, it is likely that adverse impacts were feared mainly for the self-consciously Masurian activists making up its small readership and less for the nationally indifferent or German-identifying segments of the

⁴⁸ "Die Oppelner 'Schwerverbrecher': Deutsche Fanatiker sind besser als Landesverräter," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

⁴⁹ "Millionenheer der männlichen Arbeitslosen"; "Nationalsozialisten fordern Grenzschutz-Ost," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, November 27, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

⁵⁰ "notwendigen Nationalismus," "die Vorhut einer großen Volksarmee"; "Die Gleiwitzer Polizei wird nationalsozialistisch," *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 12, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

⁵¹ "'gleiche Rechte'; "Polenfeindliche Offensive in Deutschland. Angriffe auf die polnische Geistlichkeit. Bestrebungen zur Liquidation des polnischen Schulwesens im Grenzgebiet," *Polonia*, June 18, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁵² "Wem nicht zu raten ist, dem ist auch nicht zu helfen.," [*Cech*], [1929]. APOI, [Nr. 388/144].

borderlands populations whom Prussia's Nazis were trying to attract. The enrollment of children in minority schools should, *for its part*, the 1930 proposed "Law for the Protection of the Borders" propounded, disqualify their guardians from purchasing real estate. Moreover, landowners who permitted their workers to send their offspring to Polish schools or who employed Polish seasonal laborers were to incur penalties.⁵³ Two years later, an interpellation to the Prussian Diet contended that "the attempts of the Polish state to directly or indirectly come into possession of farms within the German borders" were growing ever larger in scope.⁵⁴ It therefore urged the Prussian state ministry to make full use of the provisions of a 1915 law for the regulation of the sale of agricultural properties and to consider introducing additional and harsher laws. One realtor who had sold some land parcels to Poles when tasked with parceling an estate in far eastern Brandenburg the Diet's Nazi deputies even wished to have indicted for treason.⁵⁵ Likewise, Wilhelm Kube, the *Gauleiter* responsible for the Border Province, asked that the editor of *Cech* be charged with high treason for his use of the phrase "German cultural outrage".⁵⁶ He further demanded that the editor be fired from a post he supposedly held in the police department and that the "Polish background" of his deeds be examined.⁵⁷ Prussian minister of the interior Severing's refusal to act upon these requests, because, for one thing, the editor had never worked for the police, was dismissed by the far-right *Deutsche Zeitung* as nepotism towards a presumed party comrade.⁵⁸ It was precisely to be rejected by officials that all these impracticably radical proposals seem to have been designed, for such rebuffs had the potential to make the

⁵³ "Gesetz über die Sicherung der Grenzen"; "Das Gespenst des Haktismus über der polnischen Minderheit in Deutschland," *Polonia*, October 29, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

⁵⁴ "die Versuche des polnischen Staates, mittelbar oder unmittelbar in den Besitz landwirtschaftlicher Betriebe innerhalb der deutschen Grenze zu gelangen, einen immer stärkeren Umfang annehmen"; "Polnische Gier nach deutschem Land," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 2, 1932. MOB.

⁵⁵ "zulässigen Rechtswege"; Complaint of the Union of Poles to the League of Nations. APO, NPO, 111.

⁵⁶ "von deutscher Kulturschande"; Report, *Deutsche Zeitung*, September 17, 1931. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 172.

⁵⁷ "polnischen Hintergründe"; Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

government look unwilling to take the necessary steps to protect the borderlands' Germandom. The Nazi party, in contrast, appeared as the forceful, proactive champion of tough measures.

In addition to these bills intended to demonstrate assertiveness towards Poles and Poland, the party also made a point of introducing ones that heralded greater aid and understanding for the borderlands under the Nazis. Engaging borderland residents' fear of Polish invasion, for instance, in 1930 Nazi deputies enjoined the federal and state governments to take all "suitable and permissible" action for East Prussia's defense,⁵⁹ if need be, an addendum urged, in violation of the armaments limits imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, "because the security of the province and the life of its inhabitants must be regarded more highly than the formal fulfillment of indecent and unlawful treaties."⁶⁰ "In particular the immediate new construction of armored cruiser B and the further expansion of the fleet, as well as the setting up of the passive gas and air raid protection for the defenseless population, are to be tackled immediately," they insisted.⁶¹ The call for increased defense measures did in fact pass the provincial Diet, but the proposal to flout the peace treaty did not.⁶² As for keeping farmland in German hands, a January 1933 bill in the Prussian Diet complemented the Nazis' plans for restrictions on Poles' purchasing rights. It pressed for the capping of interest rates, the ending of the forced collection of taxes, and the cessation of foreclosures, with creditors instead to be compelled to conduct re-negotiations of debt settlement plans with their debtors. The preservation of German landownership, the initiative argued, was more important in border regions than the upholding of conventional ideas about the necessity of repaying debts or of paying

⁵⁹ "geeigneten und zulässigen"; "Unsere Arbeit im Provinziallandtag," *Ostpreußischer Beobachter*, April 6, 1930. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 95e.

⁶⁰ "da die Sicherheit der Provinz und das Leben ihrer Bewohner höher stehen muss, als die formelle Erfüllung unsittlicher und widerrechtlicher Verträge, [sic]"; Ibid.

⁶¹ "Insbesondere sind der sofortige Neubau des PanzerkreuzersB[sic]! und der weitere Ausbau der Flotte, sowie die Einrichtung des passiven Gas- und Luftschutzes für die wehrlose Bevölkerung sofort in Angriff zu nehmen."; Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

taxes.⁶³ In support of the German school system in border areas, the NSDAP caucus in 1932 petitioned the Prussian Diet to refrain from applying a recent decree there that prohibited the take-over by the state of municipal schools. The aim was, it seems, to prevent the closure of failing German schools in regions where the competing minority schools were considered a real threat. It was further asked that youth hostels in the borderlands, where students from across the country could witness the regions' plight, no longer be made to pay rent to the state for their leases.⁶⁴ For the borderlands' theatres too, Nazi delegates demanded aid from the Prussian Diet. Instead of the allocated 200,000 marks of the state's theatre budget they insisted on 700,000 for the theatres of East Prussia, Silesia, and Schleswig-Holstein. After all, these theatres, unlike Berlin's, which had received the lion's share of funding, were important *Kulturträger*, who spread German culture in contested regions and fortified Germans' spirits there. Their role was to "spiritually raise up the borderland population and to show it again and again that it is not fighting a losing battle," because the "hinterland" supports it.⁶⁵ Schleswig-Holstein's authorities at least seemed woefully unaware of this cultural work's importance, however, the *Flensburger NS-Zeitung* charged, and had therefore failed to push more successfully for federal subsidies by playing up the province's beleaguered borderland status, as Silesian and East Prussian officials so often did. Since in this case those other two provinces had also received few funds, the Nazi critique, like all of these policy proposals, was less about actual failures than about portraying the government as having done too little for the population of the borderland, when the Nazis were in contrast lobbying for it vigorously. Nazi schemes occasionally appeared to benefit border populations only at first glance though. In 1932, the East Prussian SPD, for example,

⁶³ "Masuren in höchster Gefahr - Urantrag der Fraktion der NSDAP im Preußischen Landtag," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 3, 1933. MOB.

⁶⁴ "NSDAP für Grenzlandschulen," *Pommersche Zeitung*, August 3, 1932. KP.

⁶⁵ "...damit die ersten Kulturträger, die Theater, die Grenzlandbevölkerung seelisch aufrichten und ihr immer wieder zeigen, daß sie nicht auf verlorenem Posten steht, daß das Hinterland sie nicht verläßt in ihrem schweren Kampf."; "Grenzlandsorgen," *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, August 6, 1932. SHLB.

published a flyer calling attention to the Nazi demand in the Prussian Diet for the complete suppression of day-to-day border traffic. Once, the province had thrived on cross-border trade with Russia, but with the creation of Lithuania and Poland this had ceased, rendering many unemployed. Since then, impoverished workers had at least been able to buy staple foods cheaply in the new neighboring countries. The Nazi policy would only be advantageous for the border strips' artisan trades.⁶⁶

This superficiality of Nazism's championing of the borderlands is also evident in the role in the regions' deliverance attributed to Adolf Hitler. One speaker proclaimed that "nobody from the assistant to *Landeshauptmann* Woche and *Regierungspräsident* Lukaschek" had done anything for Upper Silesia's retention and that gratitude for it was instead owed to Hitler, a bizarre claim considering Lukaschek had been the *Landrat* of the region's most heavily Polish-speaking county and a leading figure in the *Schlesischer Ausschuss* whereas Hitler had never set foot in Upper Silesia during the plebiscite period.⁶⁷ A 1932 election poster from East Prussian Königsberg, meanwhile, professed that "Adolf Hitler is the only German politician who has not consorted with any Frenchman, who has received no French or Polish politician and no French or Polish journalist."⁶⁸ For thirteen years he allegedly had, as the first to do so, "incessantly pointed to the East as the big future issue of the German nation."⁶⁹ He had furthermore fought not only the Treaty of Versailles but also the German East's continued endangerment, while the "November parties" had relinquished German territory after the war.⁷⁰ These parties now feared the Nazi movement and had, the poster urged, to be proven right in their

⁶⁶ Leaflet, July 28, 1932. APOI, 388/42.

⁶⁷ "In Oberschlesien habe keiner, vom Assistenten bis zum Landeshauptmann Woche und Regierungspräsidenten Lukaschek für die Erhaltung Oberschlesiens etwas getan, sondern ihm (gemeint war Hitler) müsste man dankbar sein."; "Betrifft: Öffentliche NSDAP.-Versammlung am 28. November 1931 in Ober-Kundendorf, Kreis Kreuzburg O/S.," December 16, 1931. APO, RO, 1804.

⁶⁸ "Adolf Hitler ist der einzige deutsche Politiker, der seit dem Jahre 1918 mit keinem Franzosen verkehrt, keinen französischen oder polnischen Politiker und keinen französischen oder polnischen Journalisten empfangen hat.;" Poster "Wählt Adolf Hitler!," F. Großherr, [1932]. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 100c.

⁶⁹ "Adolf Hitler war der erste deutsche Politiker, der unentwegt auf den Osten als die große Zukunftsfrage der deutschen Nation hinwies.;" Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Die Novemberparteien haben einst den deutschen Boden preisgegeben.;" Ibid.

anxieties at the polls. Most full of pathos was an article titled “Bleeding Borders!” in a 1932 election supplement to the *Preußische Zeitung*, which related how Poland and Lithuania supposedly oppressed their German minorities and wished to usurp East Prussia. “And Mr Brüning?,” the piece asked. “He is scandalized. He bangs his fist on the table. He ascertains a breach of international law. He protests, he calls upon the Hague court. And Mr President von Hindenburg assures the German East that he will never forsake it. Never! Meanwhile the ‘cousins’ [Poland and Lithuania] disregard German rights ever more audaciously and unconcernedly. France is laughing up its sleeve and Mr Brüning holds election speeches,” it answered its own question.⁷¹ “Into the anxious, starless nights, into the gloomy days” ethnic Germans’ hearts therefore cried, “For your sake and for ours, elect the *Führer* before whose strong fist, before whose hard will, the Pole, the Lithuanian, and the Frenchy already today shiver. Help us, or we are lost. Adolf Hitler, come and save us.”⁷² While parliamentary interpellations proposed and publicized what were held to be better, firmer policies, Hitler was portrayed as the corresponding leadership alternative. One article even tried to buttress this savior role ascribed to Hitler by invoking his Austrian background. While some, the piece claimed, held his lack of Prussian heritage against him, Prussian-ness, it maintained, was really a quality that could be assimilated and that many South and West Germans, the Hohenzollern among them, had attained before him. In fact, Hitler had a greater understanding for the troubles of the Prussian East than many born Prussians, the article ventured, because he was “in a certain

⁷¹ “Und Herr Brüning? Er ist entrüstet. ER schlägt mit der Faust auf den Tisch. Er stellt einen Bruch des Völkerrechts fest. ER protestiert, er ruft den Haager Gerichtshof an. Und der Herr Reichspräsident von Hindenburg versichert dem deutschen Osten, daß er ihn nie im Stiche lassen werde. Nie! Inzwischen schalten die ‘Vettern’ [Polen & Litauen] immer dreister und unbekümmerter mit deutschem Recht. Frankreich lacht sich ins Fäustchen und Herr Brüning hält Wahlreden.”; “Blutende Grenzen,” “*Schlagt Severing!*” - *Sonderbeilage der “Preußischen Zeitung,”* March 30, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 100c.

⁷² “Und die blutenden Grenzen, die verratenen Herzen schreien es in die bangen, sternlosen Nächte, in die düsteren Tage hinein: Ihr Brüder und Schwestern, die ihr noch in Deutschland leben dürft, helft uns! Wählt euch und uns den Führer, vor dessen starker Faust, vor dessen hartem Willen schon heute der Pole, der Litauer und der Franzmann zittern. Helft uns, sonst sind wir verloren. Adolf Hitler, komm und rette uns.”; *Ibid.*

sense a borderland German and even perhaps also an ‘East German’.”⁷³ “His political direction,” it continued, “he acquired in Vienna, one bulwark of Germandom against the East, (Königsberg is the other)...He grew up himself in the area, which carried the idea of Germany toward the East into Slavic-ness, as is also East Prussia’s task.”⁷⁴ The baselessness of these exaltations is evident.

With the exception of this occasional promotion of Hitler as the borderlands’ rescuer, attacks on the government’s handling of border issues were neither new nor unique to Nazism, for the *Stahlhelm* and DVFP had long similarly rebuked the authorities. Like their Nazi peers and independently from them, for instance, the *Stahlhelm* men of the Border Province’s Flatow district routinely targeted the priest and leading Polish activist Domanski. At one rally targeting Domanski in 1930, the *Stahlhelm* speaker censured the authorities’ perceived weakness and pusillanimity in the face of Polish agitation, criticizing the government’s habit of justifying its approach by invoking of the interests of the German minority in Poland, because those were never going to be honored anyway.⁷⁵ This critique echoes the complaints of the NSDAP branch at Oppeln following the theatre riot there. As early as 1926, meanwhile, a speaker at a *Grenzlandkundgebung* hosted by the *Stahlhelm* in Oppeln castigated the government’s indulgence of minority schools, when German minorities across Eastern Europe were not, according to him, even granted the right to religion lessons in their native language in public schools.⁷⁶

In addition to their critiques and animosities, the Nazis and the older far right also had in common their manners of communicating them, with the latter, for example, also

⁷³ “Er ist in gewissem Sinne ein Grenzdeutscher und sogar vielleicht auch ein ‘Ostdeutscher’.”; “Hitler und Ostpreußen,” *Preußische Zeitung*, April 2/3, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 93a.

⁷⁴ “Seine politische Richtung hat er in Wien, der einen Trutzburg des Deutschtums nach dem Osten, (Königsberg ist die andere), erworben...Er selbst ist auf dem Raume groß geworden, der den Gedanken Deutschlands in das Sklaventum [sic] nach Osten trug, wie es auch die Aufgabe Ostpreußens ist.”; Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Stahlhelmaufmarsch in Zakrzewo,” *Die Grenzmark*, November 18, 1930. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 272.

⁷⁶ “Betrifft die am 28. Juni d. Js. in Oppeln stattgefundene Grenzlandtagung,” June 30, 1926. APO, NPO, 990.

given to airing its grievances about border politics from within governmental bodies or to them. The leadership of the DVFP in Masurian Ortelsburg, for instance, wrote to the Prussian ministry of the interior in 1925 to announce that their party's district convention and the subsequent public meeting had unanimously endorsed a resolution that “raised flaming protest against the state government looking on idly as Polish propaganda is conducted in our Masuria.”⁷⁷ “We proved our loyalty and love for the *Heimat* in the plebiscite and’,” they warned, “expect the state government to intervene before we proceed to self-help.”⁷⁸ A resolution was adopted too at the parallel overflowing German Nationalist People's Party rallies that in June 1929 protested the verdict against the Nazi and *Stahlhelm* youths, who had thrown stink bombs during the performance of *Halka* in Oppeln. The missive complained about the inroads Poles were supposedly making in German Upper Silesia and about “the privileging of the Polish minority and the undignified yieldingness” of the authorities that facilitated them.⁷⁹ In the face of Polish activism and governmental mismanagement, President Hindenburg was therefore called upon to step in and once again save “our *Heimat*.”⁸⁰

From their elected positions, DVFP delegates to legislative bodies joined in such denunciations of the reigning government. In 1925, for instance, DVFP Diet deputies Stock and Wulle, ostensibly motivated by the mass of “indignant mail” they were receiving from Upper Silesia, submitted an interpellation querying why the Prussian state ministry had not acted on an earlier DNVP submission that had accused the Catholic religion teacher at Oppeln’s *Gymnasium* of “subversive activity in the Polish interest” in

⁷⁷ “Wir erheben flammenden Protest dagegen, daß eine Staatsregierung untätig zusieht, wie in unserem Masuren polnische Propaganda betrieben wird.”; Letter from the district leadership of the DVFP Ortelsburg to the Prussian interior ministry, August 16, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 170.

⁷⁸ “Wir haben bei der Abstimmung unsere Treue und Liebe zur Heimat bewiesen und erwarten, daß die Staatsregierung eingreift, bevor wir zur Selbsthilfe schreiten.”; Ibid.

⁷⁹ “Bevorrechten der polnischen Minderheit und würdelose Nachgiebigkeit”; “Oppeln und die polnischen Theaterspiele,” *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, June 11, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

⁸⁰ “Rettung unserer Heimat”; Ibid.

the form of promoting Polish-ness among his pupils.⁸¹ Two years later, the working group of right-wing deputies, led by DVFP politician Teschke, in Flatow's *Kreistag* tabled a resolution against the introduction of Polish language instruction in the district's public schools, a matter that as a state-wide policy fell outside the remit of that body. Due to this lack of competence, the *Landrat* declined to discuss the petition and, when Teschke vehemently objected, saw himself forced to close the meeting. This incident prompted Teschke's DVFP comrade Koerner to tender a complaint to the Prussian Diet, to which he was a deputy, in which he charged the functionary with inadequate support of Germandom. Koerner asked the state ministry whether it condoned the conduct of the *Landrat* and which steps it would take either to replace him with someone more sympathetic to Germandom's struggle in the East or to find an alternative solution.⁸² The state ministry naturally found, however, that the *Landrat* had behaved correctly, heading off a potential clash between *völkisch* members of the *Kreistag*, who had "little political insight," and Domanski, who also formed part of the body.⁸³ It was unfortunate, the document concluded, that the district's Germans showed so little understanding for the necessity, if one wanted to safeguard the interests of the German minority across the border, of accommodating the Polish minority this side of it.⁸⁴ In the nearby Schlochau district, another DVFP *Kreistag* member went public with his opprobrium for the republic in 1926 in response to a travel report published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. That piece's author had detailed the province's travails with sympathy and stressed the region's importance. Its requests for financial aid, he had written, were "not undue."⁸⁵ However, the Border Province's voters should also consider, he admonished, whether their

⁸¹ "die empörten Zuschriften," "Wühlarbeit im polnischen Interesse"; "Nr 900 A: Kleine Anfrage Nr 436," July 16, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 698.

⁸² Kleine Anfrage Nr. 1968, November 23, 1927. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 274.

⁸³ "geringen politischen Einsicht"; "Betrifft: Kleine Anfrage des deutsch-völkischen Landtagsabgeordneten Dr. Koerner vom 23. November 1927," December 17, 1927. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 274.

⁸⁴ Draft "Antwort auf die Kleine Anfrage Nr. 1968 des Abgeordneten Dr. Körner, Deutsch-völkische Freiheitspartei, betr. Vorgänge im Kreise Flatow.," April 1928. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 274.

⁸⁵ "nicht unbillig"; "Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen: Reiseeindrücke," *Berliner Tageblatt*, August 12, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 14.

continuous election of anti-republican politicians detracted from their claim to aid from a government they thereby undermined. Schröder, himself one of these anti-republican officials, responded in the *Deutsches Tageblatt* that making aid contingent on political support curtailed electoral freedom and hardly improved the regard the republic enjoyed in the Border Province. “‘Democracy’ at its finest,” he fumed.⁸⁶ In both tone and content, far-right petitions and complaints like these were akin to later Nazi ones.

Another custom the far-right and Nazi movements in the border regions shared were the ubiquitous borderland rallies and marches. One notable *Stahlhelm* event of this type took place in Zakrzewo, Domanski’s home village, in 1930. That particular rally had been initiated by the *Gau* leadership for Pomerania and had the strong support of the national directorate, a circumstance that gave the *Stahlhelm* district leader an excuse not to call off the march when the *Landrat* asked him to.⁸⁷ At the rally, the speaker professed that the *Stahlhelm* would not tolerate German villages being “subjected to the despotism of Polish priests” nor rest “until Germany’s borders in the East are moved behind the Vistula.”⁸⁸ Despite this incendiary rhetoric, no altercations occurred, thanks largely to the *Landrat* having called Domanski in advance, who persuaded local Poles to stay home.⁸⁹ In 1928, a similar event took place in far eastern Pomeranian Stolp, at which the speaker, as was *de rigueur*, invoked irredentist ambitions and loyalty to Germans cut off from the fatherland by the borders’ alteration. The visiting East Prussian *Stahlhelm* chief declared that rather than being a borderland Pomerania should be linked to East Prussia by land.

⁸⁶ “‘Demokratie’ in Reinkultur: Nur Gesinnungstüchtige sollen Staatshilfe erhalten!,” *Das Deutsche Tageblatt*, September 18, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 14.

⁸⁷ “Betrifft: Grenzlandmarsch des Stahlhelms,” November 10, 1930. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 272.

⁸⁸ der Willkür polnischer Pfarrer ausgesetzt sind,” “bis Deutschlands Grenzen im Osten bis hinter die Weichsel verlegt sind”; “Betrifft: Grenzlandfahrt des Stahlhelm,” November 16, 1930. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 272.

⁸⁹ “Bericht über die Stahlhelmdemonstration am 16. November 1930 im Kreise Flatow,” November 17, 1930. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 272.

For an account of this episode, see also: Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze: Deutsche und Polen in den Kreisen Flatow (Złotów) und Zempelburg (Śępólno Krajeńskie) 1900-1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 333-334.

Franz Seldte, the *Stahlhelm*'s founder, sent a telegram for the occasion from the East Frisian town of Emden, where he was attending an equivalent rally directed against the border with Denmark. To his assurance of that *Gau*'s solidarity with Pomerania, the response from Stolp read, "Unshakable is our resolve, unbent our will, not to cease the fight until the route Emden-Stolp-Königsberg leads through a free, undivided Germany."⁹⁰ As Seldte's telegram indicates, *Grenzland* rallies took place on Germany's northern border as well as in the East. Seldte himself participated in another, 2,000-strong demonstration in the North in 1930, this time in Flensburg.⁹¹ In Eastern Pomerania too, *Grenzland* rallies recurred. In 1930, a *Stahlhelm* contingent of 500 marched in Varzin, where Bismarck, hailed at the event for supposedly having foreseen the "danger in the East," had once lived.⁹² The program kicked off with a speech by the district leader of the *Stahlhelm*, who spoke of the need to demonstrate one's presence and strength in the face of Poland's increasing rebelliousness and constant border violations. Then the participants trooped to the Bismarck memorial, which stood immediately next to "the border that must not be," and the district leader there addressed them again, prophesying that Germans would one day through "courage and blood" win freedom.⁹³ The *Deutscher Abend* that followed adopted a resolution decrying Polish boundary breaches and exhorting the government to finally begin defending the borders more energetically, including by arming the entire borderland population.⁹⁴ In nearby Lauenburg, around 2,000 demonstrators gathered in 1929 when the *Stahlhelm* convoked rallies across the organization's East German *Gaue* in solidarity with one in Danzig that had been

⁹⁰ "Unerschütterlich ist unser Entschluß, ungebeugt unser Wille, den Kampf nicht einzustellen, bis der Weg Emden-Stolp-Königsberg durch ein freie ungeteiltes Deutschland führen wird."; "Unerhörte Kundgebung in Stolp," *Kurjer Poznanski*, September 15, 1928, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 22, 1928. APK, RK, 4368.

⁹¹ "Nachweisung über die Versammlungstätigkeit der rechts-und linksradikal eingestellten Parteien und Organisationen gem. Verfüg. vom 10.6.29 I.P.P.623-6," November 1, 1930. LSH, Abt. 309, Nr. 22669.

⁹² "Gefahr im Osten"; "Stahlhelmaufmarsch in Hammermühle und Varzin," *Zeitung für Ostpommern*, [December 2] 1930. APK, RK, 4364.

⁹³ "Grenze, die nicht sein darf," "Mut und Blut"; Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

forbidden. That prohibition, the *Lauenburger Zeitung* asserted, was illustrative of the danger Germandom faced in the East and in the free city in particular. Poland, it maintained, had discovered Danzig's weaknesses, "parliamentarianism and foreign influence," and once Danzig had fallen to Poland that country would direct its attention to Eastern German territories.⁹⁵ Despite clashes with local Communists on the preceding day, the Lauenburg march went smoothly, but not so one spontaneously embarked on by the *Stahlhelm* group from the Border Province's Grabau.⁹⁶ Its members had travelled to nearby Gross Peterkau to practice at that village's shooting range and afterwards they marched to the border where a lieutenant gave a speech about the organization's determination to win back the land on the other side thereof. Since a passing Polish border official overheard it, this address almost resulted in a confrontation and a border violation.⁹⁷ Beyond the *Stahlhelm*, other societies too held border-related events, with the *Alldeutscher Verband*, for example, hosting an Eastern Marches convention in Upper Silesian Gleiwitz in March 1931, which drew around 500 attendees, many of them *Stahlhelm* or NSDAP members.⁹⁸

More so than the Nazis, the *Stahlhelm* maintained close ties to the army and supported its *Grenzschutz* initiative, as documented by repeated investigations into this relationship's potentially problematic nature. In 1925, for example, a republican Diet deputy, who had heard from his party's branch secretary there that the *Stahlhelm* had twice in a month participated in official military parades in Meseritz in the Border Province, wrote to the Prussian minister of the interior. The police had apparently not intervened.⁹⁹ Another letter, this one to the *Oberpräsident*, dismissed the complaint as a

⁹⁵ "Parlamentarismus und fremdländischen Einfluss"; "Stahlhelm-Aufmarsch am 5. Mai in Lauenburg i. Pom.," *Lauenburger Zeitung*, April 17, 1929. APK, RK, 4368.

⁹⁶ "Bericht betreffend Stahlhelm-Aufmarsch am 4. und 5. Mai 1929 in Lauenburg i.Pom.," May 8, 1929. APK, RK, 4368.

⁹⁷ Letter from the police outpost in Gross Peterkau to the *Landrat* in Schlochau, June 20, 1932. APP, NPP, 172.

⁹⁸ "Betrifft: 'Ostmarkentagung' des 'Alldeutschen Verbandes' am 21./22. März 1931 in Gleiwitz," April 21, 1931. APO, NPO, 991.

⁹⁹ Letter to the Prussian interior minister, December 9, 1925. APP, NPP, 170.

product of the unpopularity since the border fights of the immediate post-war period of local *Stahlhelm* leader Count Dohna with the Poles, thereby casting aspersions on the national loyalties of the complainant and of his local informer.¹⁰⁰ When the party secretary, whom the Diet delegate had cited as his source, was eventually called in for questioning by the authorities, it turned out that his information about Dohna's participation in the parade had been second hand. While Dohna had not stood immediately next to the presiding officers, the party secretary had heard, he had been recognizably part of the group and though he had not greeted the army regiments as they marched past, he had saluted the *Stahlhelm* members that followed them in like manner.¹⁰¹ Meseritz's *Landrat* and several police officials, meanwhile, averred that Dohna had remained apart from the group of officers.¹⁰² In any case, he and the *Stahlhelm* had participated in the army event, no matter how informally. In Flatow, the bonds between local military functionaries and the *Stahlhelm* similarly came under scrutiny in 1926. The investigating official reported to the police headquarters in Berlin that the army's *Kreis* commander acted as a contact man between his organization and the *Stahlhelm*, helping to plan *Stahlhelm* maneuvers and providing feedback at them. His predecessors too had kept up close links with the *Stahlhelm* group, occasioning their transfer elsewhere. A sergeant stationed in Flatow, meanwhile, had actually been assigned by the army to act as an assistant and sports teacher to the local *Stahlhelm* group, in which the army took a particular interest because it would be one of the first to be called up in case of Polish attack.¹⁰³ A different report denied all this.¹⁰⁴ While the military was glad of additional manpower it could rely on in case of invasion, republican officials were nervous about granting the far right access to the army's resources. In

¹⁰⁰ Letter to the *Oberpräsident*, January 12, 1926. APP, NPP, 170.

¹⁰¹ Protocol of interrogation, March 15, 1926. APP, NPP, 170.

¹⁰² "Betritt: Uebung der Pioniere bei Betsche.," March 17, 1926. APP, NPP, 170.

¹⁰³ "Betritt: Vorgänge in Flatow," October 13, 1926. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 272.

¹⁰⁴ "Betritt: Tätigkeit des Oberstleutnants a.D. v. Negelein," November 9, 1926. APK, Landratsamt Flatow, 272.

Eastern Pomerania, for instance, the regional government worried in 1931 that if the right ever concluded it could not gain power legally and attempted a coup, the *Grenzschutz* would be perfectly positioned to plunder the "secret weapons depots of the *Reichswehr*."¹⁰⁵ After all, the border defense units' membership in the area consisted almost entirely of *Stahlhelm* members, supplemented by some Nazis, and they were therefore unlikely to remain loyal to the republic.¹⁰⁶

Aside from participation in the official *Grenzschutz*, the *Stahlhelm* also independently made preparations for the possibility of fighting Poland. When in 1930 Polish anti-German terror in Eastern Upper Silesia was perceived to be at its peak, for instance, the *Stahlhelm* alongside various other Upper Silesian nationalist paramilitaries considered setting up a joint border defense force. That project, however, foundered on disputes about the distribution of leadership roles among the involved organizations. Even from within the *Stahlhelm* two Ratibor men split off over the issue, setting up their own *Oberschlesische Heimwehr*.¹⁰⁷ In 1932, meanwhile, the *Stahlhelm* solicited the rental of a manor house as a paramilitary sports school, which was to train Upper Silesia's youth for border protection, from the region's *Oberpräsident*.¹⁰⁸ Poles certainly did understand such *Stahlhelm* activities as a threat, with the *Kurjer Poznanski*, for one, reporting in 1926 that the organization was training day and night, allegedly transforming border towns into military camps and building watchtowers that were being inspected by the military. While this, like many Polish reports, was dismissed as exaggerated and many no doubt were, there can be no doubt that the *Stahlhelm* did anticipate and train for a conflict with Poland.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ "'gedeckten Waffenlager' der Reichswehr"; Letter, October 16, 1931. APK, RK, 4368.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Betrifft: Gründung einer 'Oberschlesischen Heimwehr'," July 2, 1931. APO, NPO, 991.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from the *Stahlhelm* to the *Oberpräsident*, June 9, 1932. APO, NPO, 998.

¹⁰⁹ "Angebliche deutsche militärische Uebungen an der deutsch-poln. Grenze," June 1, 1926. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 272.

More immediately threatening to borderland Poles than militaristic posturing was day-to-day violent harassment, which *Stahlhelm* men and other right-wing radicals routinely engaged in. In 1925, for example, Upper Silesia's *Katolik Codzienny* reported that “*Heimattreue*” had attacked a group of teenagers who were singing a Polish ditty while walking, without the police intervening.¹¹⁰ That same year, the paper also publicized that two brothers, at least one of whom belonged to the *Stahlhelm*, had broken into the home of a Polish man and terrorized him and his wife.¹¹¹ In the spring of 1926, meanwhile, the *Katolik* carried a story about *Stahlhelm* members disturbing and eventually breaking up a Polish theatre performance in Wieschowa by shouting “*Heil Front*” and singing nationalist songs.¹¹² At around the same time, a local *Selbstschutz* leader in Biskupitz had, according to the *Katolik*, intimidated an inn owner into cancelling a Polish Easter play, for which he had previously agreed to rent out his hall.¹¹³ The following year, a dance in Beuthen erupted into chaos when two tipsy men began singing a mix of German and Polish songs, since thereupon a fellow attendee, who reportedly belonged to the *Stahlhelm*, accused one of the singers of having participated in the Polish insurgency and called him a “‘bloody insurgent’.”¹¹⁴ In 1928, some *Stahlhelm* men as well as a Pole were sentenced to fines in Städtisch Dombrowa for battery and “throwing with stones.”¹¹⁵ Later that year, the *Stahlhelm* held an anti-Polish rally just outside the Polish consulate in Beuthen, singing *Siegreich wollen wir Polen schlagen*.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ “Aus Michowitz,” *Katolik Codzienny*, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, September 30, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹¹¹ Copy of an article by the editorial staff of the *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, December 14, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹¹² “Terroristischer Überfall auf eine polnische Vorstellung,” copy by the the editorial staff of the *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, April 29, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹¹³ “Brutaler deutscher Terror in Biskupitz,” copy by the the editorial staff of the *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, April 9, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹¹⁴ “‘Du verfluchter Insurgent’”; “Schlägerei aus politischer Ursache,” September 8, 1927. APO, NPO, 1024.

¹¹⁵ “Schlägerei in Städtisch-Dombrowa,” January 23, 1928. APO, NPO, 1024.

¹¹⁶ “Unchristliche Kultur,” *Katolik Codzienny*, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 14, 1928. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 385.

The occurrence of this sort of minor incident continued into the early 1930s. In 1930, a "nationalist parade" in the Border Province's Preußenfelde, in which *Stahlhelm* members reportedly participated, had allegedly chanted "Poles out, the German fist toils here" outside the homes of the village's Poles. In 1931, meanwhile, *Stahlhelm* men who, cycling near the Upper Silesian border, sang *Siegreich wollen wir Polen schlagen* caused the government some trouble, for a local inn owner reported them, claiming that a Polish customs official had overheard their singing.¹¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, bashed-in windows were reported by the *Bank Ludowy* in Groß-Strehlitz¹¹⁸ and also by a man who had been active for the Polish party during the plebiscite era, who suspected members of the recently founded local *Stahlhelm* branch.¹¹⁹ On New Year's Eve 1931, meanwhile, *Stahlhelm* men barged into the village pub of Upper Silesian Salesche, where Poles had gathered to celebrate, and beat the clientele using both their fists and iron chairs,¹²⁰ all the while berating their victims, interestingly, in the region's Polish dialect.¹²¹ On a larger scale 300 *Stahlhelm* men put a stop to a party hosted by the minority school in Pomeranian Oslawdamerow, motivated, according to the *Bütower Anzeiger*, by a cry for help from that village's German population. This supposed plea had reached the men - how is unclear - while they were attending a *Deutscher Tag* nearby.¹²² They promptly headed to Oslawdamerow, where, the Polish School Association detailed in its complaint, their leaders made incendiary speeches, ordering their men to tear down the Polish

¹¹⁷ "Betrifft: Angebliche Provozierung durch Angehörige des Stahlhelms längs der deutsch-polnischen Grenze bei Lukasine," January 7, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹¹⁸ Report. APO, NPO, 110.

¹¹⁹ Testimony by Johann Slodziona, March 24, 1931. APO, NPO, 110.

¹²⁰ "Immer neue Gewalttaten kommen ans Tageslicht. Man hört dies und jenes, - und aus Salesche?," January 27, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

¹²¹ "Wy pieronskie polonie, my wam dopiero pokazemy. Ihr verfluchten Polen, wir werden Euch erst zeigen. Wenn wir 1921 so dagestanden hätten, wie wir heute dastehen, to Was pieronsky polonie pozazeromy'."; "Strafantrag und Strafanzeige 1) des Franz Mainusch, 2) des Emanuel Matsche, 3) des Dominik Gardas sämtlich aus Kalesche, Kr. Gr. Strehlitz O./S. wegen gefährlicher Körperverletzung durch Mitglieder der Stahlhelmorganisation," January 4, 1932. APO, NPO, 111.

¹²² "Polnische Provokation veranlaßt den Stahlhelm einzugreifen!," *Bütower Anzeiger*, September 9, 1930. APO, NPO, 111.

garlands. Some of the men forced entry into the school, which they demolished, and others into the Polish teacher's home, menacing him. Another teacher was hiding in a private home, which the Polish school rented, with his charges, who began to cry when *Stahlhelm* men broke in and threatened him. The son of the house's owner was also the target of insults. Under these circumstances, the party could not go ahead and the children had to be taken home early.¹²³

As was more widely common, reports of this *Stahlhelm* intimidation at Oslawdamerow appeared alongside accounts of Nazi violence. In the *Głos Pogranicza*, for instance, the same article recounted both the incident in Oslawdamerow and the Nazis' disbanding of an assembly with Polish leader Domanski in Damsdorf.¹²⁴ Both episodes, which had prompted outrage in Poland and ostensibly outside Germany more generally, were portrayed as illustrative of the negligent passivity of German local authorities, who were accused of having let them happen. Both incidents, among many others, were likewise discussed in a German submission to the Mixed Commission responding to anti-Polish incidents in Prussia in the last quarter of 1930.¹²⁵ A seventy-two-page Polish complaint made to the League of Nations, meanwhile, listed the 1931 *Stahlhelm* assault on a Polish New Year's party and the beating by *Stahlhelm* members, on two separate occasions, of an employee of the Union of Poles in Germany in Tost and of a farmer respectively. The document charged Nazis, for their part, with assailing a Pole in Rosmierka and, in a different episode, the Polish campaigner Adamiok, with forming an SA troop in a village in Neidenburg county in reaction to the establishment of a minority school there, and with scaring a Polish man out of his memberships in Polish organizations through an anti-Polish article in a Rhenish-Westphalian Nazi paper.¹²⁶ That

¹²³ Report to the *Landrat* in Bütow, September 9, 1930. APO, NPO, 111.

¹²⁴ "Skandalöse Vorgänge in Oslawdamerow und Damsdorf.," *Głos Pogranicza*, September 24, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

¹²⁵ "Denkschrift über Vorfälle angeblich terroristischen Charakters gegen die polnische Minderheit in Preußen aus der Zeit vom 1. September bis 31. Dezember 1930." APO, NPO, 109.

¹²⁶ Complaint by the Union of Poles to the League of Nations. APO, NPO, 111.

Nazis and other far-right militants were often lumped together as interchangeable by Poles is further illustrated by another report to the Mixed Commission, which detailed an assault by “eight Hitler supporters” on Polish campaigners.¹²⁷ Two of the attackers were, however, described as “wearing uniforms of the *Stahlhelm* organization.”¹²⁸ They, the complainants speculated, “had chased us away from the cemetery,” where they were passing out flyers, “only because they knew the Hitler supporters were waiting for us.”¹²⁹

In fact, the Nazis and the rest of the far right did make common cause on borderland issues. This symbiosis is particularly apparent in the far-right press’ crucial encouragement of the Nazi movement. Far-right newspapers, as has been discussed in previous chapters, generated a flood of press coverage in defense of the Potempa murderers as well as of those, Nazis prominently among them, who rioted in Oppeln in 1929. Especially where surviving Nazi papers are scarce, such favorable accounts of Nazi activism and violence in the wider far-right press are important source material. In one case, the *Kurier Poznanski* even alleged a direct link between Nazi violence and the far-right press’ incendiary rhetoric. A recent Nazi raid on the Polish clubhouse in Masurian Allenstein, in which the Polish bank was also housed, and a skirmish with the 200 youths who were gathered there at the time, the paper contended, had been enabled by the nationalist press’ attacks on the Polish bank, which had “filled the Hitlerites with courage” to ambush the place.¹³⁰ Many of these papers that provided incitement and cover for the Nazi movement retained non-Nazi identities, but some, like the *Schleswigsche Nachrichten* or Flatow’s *Grenzmark*, adopted the party line outright, remaining only nominally independent. In fact, not only the were the *Grenzmark* editors

¹²⁷ “acht Hitleranhänger”; Submission by the Union of Poles to the Mixed Commission, June 11, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

¹²⁸ “hatten Uniformen der Stahlhelmorganisation an”; Ibid.

¹²⁹ “Wir nehmen an, dass die zwei Männer uns vom Friedhof nur deshalb vertrieben haben, weil ihnen bekannt war, dass die Hitlerangehörigen unserer erwarteten.”; Ibid.

¹³⁰ “hat den Hitlerleuten den Mut eingeflößt”; “Überfall der Hitlerleute auf das polnische Vereinshaus in Allenstein,” *Kurjer Poznanski*, August 10, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

vocally supportive of the movement, but its typesetter and print shop manager was the secretary of Flatow's NSDAP branch.¹³¹

On the ground, collaboration took the form of side-by-side participation in rallies and violence. In Oppeln, it has already been mentioned, *Stahlhelm* and Nazi youths together disrupted the 1929 Polish theatre performance by throwing stink bombs. Members of both organizations got involved in the official *Grenzschutz* units and therefore mingled in those. The most illustrative and best-documented instance of fraternization, however, is the 1931 *Stahlhelmtag*, an annual event that that year was held in Silesian Breslau. The overtly irredentist rally, titled "'In the East lies Germany's future'," provoked outrage and worry in Polish quarters, as a German official summary of Polish reporting indicates.¹³² An indignant *Polska Zachodnia*, for example, quoted from the speech given by *Stahlhelm* head Franz Seldte. The former frontline soldiers, Seldte proclaimed, would "never acknowledge the wresting away of Upper Silesia, East Prussia, Danzig, and Memel" and, while they did not want war, would not be content with a "slave's existence," particularly as concerned the East.¹³³ On Seldte's command attendees had furthermore performed a turn such that they stood facing menacingly eastward. The Polish envoy in Berlin apparently subsequently called in on the Foreign Office to lodge a complaint about the event and about the *Reich* government's failure to do anything about it.¹³⁴ While the Poles fumed, the Nazis had welcomed the *Stahlhelmtag*. The Nazi *Schlesischer Beobachter*, for instance, reviewed the event favorably, praising the *Stahlhelm* for pioneering the fight against the post-war system and for being, through the *Stahlhelmtag*, the "first practical *Osthilfe* that has come to Silesia."¹³⁵ At the rally itself,

¹³¹ *Z notesu Ericha Hoffmanna: Kronika Złotowa i okolic część III (lata 1921-1952)*, ed. Joachim Zdrenka (Złotow: Muzeum Ziemi Złotowskiej w Złotowie, 2011), 107.

¹³² "'Im Osten liegt die Zukunft Deutschlands'"; Report about Polish reporting on the *Stahlhelmtag* in Breslau, June 2, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹³³ "die Entreißung Oberschlesiens, Ostpreußens, Danzigs und Memel niemals anerkennen," "Sklavendasein"; Ibid.

¹³⁴ "Polnischer Protest gegen den Stahlhelm," *Volkswille*, June 7, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹³⁵ "erste praktische Osthilfe, die nach Schlesien gekommen ist"; "Mitteilungen Nr. 12," June 15, 1931. APO, RO, 1852.

many Nazis were in attendance as audience members or “traveling salesmen with newspapers and refreshments.”¹³⁶ The chants they now and again tried to start were drowned out by the noise of the crowd and the *Stahlhelm* leaders ignored Nazi attendees or treated them coolly. Between rank-and-file Nazi and *Stahlhelm* men, however, spontaneous “demonstrations of sympathy” occurred throughout the event.¹³⁷ Ordinary Nazi and *Stahlhelm* members habitually consorted, there and in other, local settings, like the *Grenzschutz* units, because the parallels between their enmities and strategies encouraged it.

While the grassroots rubbed shoulders amicably, the Nazi party did have to set itself apart from far-right competitors. Its propaganda aimed to achieve this by giving the usual criticisms of these parties as unsocial a borderland-specific twist. The practice of landowners, the traditional constituency of the right in the East, of relying on the cost-efficient labor of Polish seasonal workers was denounced as endangering not only the interests of the borderlands' German everymen but also the German character of these regions. Therefore, the already-mentioned 1930 proposal for a “Law for the Protection of the Borders” put forward plans for the punishment of those who employed foreign seasonal workers.¹³⁸ Already in the spring of 1929, a Masurian Nazi speaker had in this vein taken Albrecht von Graefe, one of the DVFP's national leaders, to task for having engaged Polish laborers since 1925, having before that poorly treated the members of the Artaman League whom he had employed.¹³⁹ Condemnations of the taking on of foreign laborers grew more frequent during the unemployment crisis that took hold in the following years. In 1930 a Nazi speaker in Masurian Lötzen, for example, reportedly repeatedly criticized the use of Polish labor, demanding that it not be hired until all

¹³⁶ “fliegende Händler mit Zeitungen und Erfrischungen”; Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Sympathiekundgebungen”; Ibid.

¹³⁸ “Das Gespenst des Hakatismus über der polnischen Minderheit in Deutschland,” *Polonia*, October 29, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

¹³⁹ Letter, April 10, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 59b.

Germans had found work.¹⁴⁰ That same year, a former estate owner, who had had to flee from the Province of Posen, spoke in Flatow and was asked during question time what the NSDAP would do against Polish seasonal labor. Despite his landed background, the speaker replied that the party would ensure that German employers hired only Germans.¹⁴¹ The following year, an article in the *Preußische Zeitung* vociferated against the employment of 100,000 Polish seasonal laborers by sugar beet farmers, which was only a reduction of one third compared to the previous year. Already then, the economic crisis had necessitated the premature sending home of seasonal labor and meant that countless German hired hands had been unable to find work at all. That only an inadequate reduction in hiring targets had occurred was, the paper's analysis of the German sugar industry concluded, a sign that the republic was failing to push through solutions to socio-economic problems, at a time when thousands of Germans were unemployed and willing to do farm work.¹⁴²

Landowners' economic practices were censured not just on economic grounds, though, but on *völkisch* ones as well, as the "Law for the Protection of the Borders" has already suggested. Following the Nazi attack on Poles at a fire brigade festival in Glumen in the Border Province, which the Nazi press portrayed as a backlash to the dominance Poles had achieved in the village's district, the *Völkischer Beobachter* laid responsibility for "these conditions" squarely at the feet of "certain estate owners, to whom cheap labor is more important than the German people's interests."¹⁴³ Their custom of employing Poles had facilitated the district becoming one of supposedly many "Polish colonies" on German soil.¹⁴⁴ One visiting speaker from Czechoslovakia went so far as to argue at an

¹⁴⁰ Clippings from *Lötzens Zeitung*, October 17, 1930 and October 20, 1930. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lötzen Nr. 11.

¹⁴¹ Report about the *Grenzland* rally in Flatow, December 9, 1930. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 275.

¹⁴² "Rübenpolacken," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 27, 1931. MOB.

¹⁴³ "Die Hauptschuld an diesen Zuständen tragen vor allem gewisse Großgrundbesitzer, denen billige Arbeitskräfte wichtiger sind, als deutsche Volksinteressen."; "Reichsbanner und Polen haben das gleiche Ziel: Polackenüberfall auf S.A.," *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 13, 1932. CUL.

¹⁴⁴ "polnische Kolonien"; Ibid.

NSDAP rally in Masurian Lyck in late 1931 that the breaking up of estates in the German East would be necessary for Germandom's preservation there. Neither in 1830 nor in 1848 had a true revolution taken place, he contended, because the reign of money and property had not successfully been broken. To safeguard vulnerable regions given the revolutions' frustration, "[a] division of the large farms would also be necessary, especially in the border district, which would in a certain sense serve as a defensive wall on the border," the speaker insisted.¹⁴⁵ "If this had already happened before the war," he averred, "we would today have no ceded territories, no corridor, and no minority peoples."¹⁴⁶

Beyond economic reproofs, the non-Nazi right was occasionally accused of more generally showing little determination in border matters. When in early 1932 over a hundred residents of the Masurian village of Jedwabno were tried for mob violence against the state prosecutor who had recently come there to investigate an earlier assault on functionaries of the Polish minority school association, the riot was blamed by the Nazi press on insensitive handling of the situation by police. The *Kreistag*, the *Preußische Zeitung* reported, therefore wrote to the *Landrat* to request the transfer of the village police chief and his superior. Only the SPD delegates and the representative of the agricultural association, who was also the district leader of the *Stahlhelm*, did not sign, which incensed the village's peasants and rank-and-file *Stahlhelm* membership. "This is what the fight for Germandom with the black-white-and-red sash looks like when worst comes to worst," the *Preußische Zeitung* sneered.¹⁴⁷ Previously too, such accusations of indifference to border issues had been made. At a rally in Masuria, Graefe,

¹⁴⁵ "Auch wäre eine Aufteilung der grossen Landwirtschaften vor allem [sic] im Grenzbezirk notwendig, die gewissermassen als Grenzwall dienen würden."; "Betrifft: Öffentliche Versammlung der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Leck am Freitag, den 20.11.31 um 20 Uhr in Fligges-Garten," November 24, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 14, Nr. 27.

¹⁴⁶ "Wäre dieses schon vor dem Kriege geschaffen, so hätten wir heute keine abgetretenen Gebiete, keinen Korridor und keine Minderheitenvölker.;" Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "So sieht der Kampf für das Deutschtum mit schwarz-weiß-roter Schärpe aus, wenn es einmal hart auf hart geht.;" "Jedwabno: Von unserem nach Neidenburg entsandten Redaktionsmitglied," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 19, 1932. MOB.

one of the DVFP's national chairs, had not once in his address brought up the Polish danger, a report to *Gauleiter* Koch by the Nazi activist who had challenged him during question time disdainfully noted.¹⁴⁸ In a DVFP rally in Masurian Lötzen the following year, *Gauleiter* Koch countered accusations by the speaker that the Nazi party had made its peace with the loss of ancient German lands that it was, to the contrary, the NSDAP that ceaselessly called for Germans of all classes to stand together for the recovery of the ceded territories, while the DVFP failed to do much.¹⁴⁹

These criticisms of the established right's handling of borderland issues were, however, not pushed terribly much, presumably since so little in actuality differentiated the Nazi movement's approach. Certainly, weaknesses in other right-wing organizations' tackling of borderland problems were not typically cited by Abel's respondents as reasons for quitting them and joining the NSDAP instead. Rather, they, like converts to Nazism across Germany, gave platitudinous reasons for their withdrawal from the traditional right. Upper Silesian Marleiter, for instance, claimed to always have considered the DNVP, in contrast to the insufficiently nationalist Marxist and Center parties, the smallest evil, but nevertheless too classist.¹⁵⁰ Erich Hinz, who resided near the border in East Prussia after having had to flee Poland, where his family still lived, likewise offered as the only explanation of his having left the *Stahlhelm* in 1928 that it was too unsocial.¹⁵¹ Only Jakob Bösch, from the Rhenish Palatinate, described how he turned to the DNVP after Germany's disintegration in 1918 but quickly recognized that the party's effective representation of nationalist positions would always be hamstrung by its

¹⁴⁸ Letter, April 10, 1929. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 59b.

¹⁴⁹ "Betrifft: Versammlung der Deutschvolk. Freiheitsbewegung am 13.2.30. in Lötzen," February 25, 1930. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lötzen Nr. 10.

¹⁵⁰ August Marleiter, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/august-span-classqueryhlmarleiterspan?ctx=e0e34de5-06f2-4404-9d1a-615d122c1a2d&idx=0>.

¹⁵¹ Erich Hinz, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58581/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlhin?ctx=df23c12d-71e7-4393-86eb-376cfbdd091a&idx=0>.

“liberal-capitalist” and unsocial character.¹⁵² “As a farmer on Germany’s southwestern border, only 15 km distant from the French border, with a blood-wise connection to people & soil,” he wrote, “I was always unsatisfied by this.”¹⁵³ Inefficacy on border issues, in addition to the classism that so frustrated him and others, had supposedly driven him to the NSDAP. Bösch was, however, very much a solitary case and, for the most part, the occasional disparagement of rival far-right parties’ border efforts gained little traction among Nazism’s following.

Fellow far-right organizations, in their turn, did try to maintain a distinct identity and a certain distance from Nazism, as the rising appeal of that movement caused a decline in their fortunes. The *Stahlhelm* leadership, as mentioned, looked coolly upon the participation of Nazi activists in their group’s flagship event, the *Stahlhelmtag*, in Breslau. In the Border Province, the leadership of the *Stahlhelm* chapter in Tirschtiegel went further, instituting a ban in 1930 on simultaneous membership in the NSDAP. This measure backfired, however, for when forced to choose many opted for the up-and-coming movement, leaving the branch’s membership depleted by half.¹⁵⁴ Elsewhere in the Border Province, concurrent membership was not forbidden, but the *Stahlhelm* nevertheless stagnated. In Jastrow, officials considered the *Stahlhelm* branch past its peak now that there was a successful NSDAP group operating in the village as well. In Tarnowke, meanwhile, the foundation of a *Stahlhelm* branch had long been anticipated, but it would probably not come to pass after all, authorities speculated in 1930, if the NSDAP set up one too.¹⁵⁵ This transferal of enthusiasm from the *Stahlhelm* to Nazism is illustrated by a meeting of the *Jungstahlhelm* in the province’s capital Schneidemühl the

¹⁵² “liberalistisch-kapitalistisch”; Jakob Bösch, accessed December 11, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58663/span-classqueryhljakobsbosch?ctx=e4931214-e935-40d2-adf9-9c74725c5ea6&idx=0>.

¹⁵³ “als Bauer an der Südwestgrenze Deutschlands, nur 15 km von der französischen Grenze entfernt, mit blutmäßiger Gebundenheit an Volk & Boden, war ich dadurch immer unbefriedigt.”; Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “Betrifft: Verhältnis der NSDAP. zum Stahlhelm,” July 28, 1930. APP, NPP, 171.

¹⁵⁵ “Betrifft: Stahlhelm im hiesigen Kreise und in Jastrow,” August 19, 1930. APK, Landratsamt Flatow 272.

previous year. There, attendees had cheered Hitler and sworn loyalty to him.¹⁵⁶ It was quite possibly this rapidly spreading enthusiasm for Hitler that prompted a speaker in Meseritz, in the same province, to stress in 1930 that the *Stahlhelm* had never accepted the Treaty of Versailles and had long insisted on Germany's right to *Lebensraum*.¹⁵⁷ The defense at least of the existing borders was another venue for the efforts of the *Stahlhelm* to maintain its distance and even potentially obstruct Nazism. In Schleswig-Holstein in 1929, for one, the *Stahlhelm* distanced itself from a Nazi proposal for the creation of so-called *Nordmark- und Heimatwehren*. In the past the organization had supported the idea of such formations, but it did not wish to collaborate on a project that had been initiated by the NSDAP and would involve working with that party.¹⁵⁸ In East Prussia, the established right, according to Nazi *Gauleiter* Koch, openly hoped that once it had "gouged out" the two "eyes" of the Nazi movement, whatever those were considered to be, it would be able to divert erstwhile Nazis "into the camp of the *Stahlhelm* and of the *Grenzschutz* formation standing behind it."¹⁵⁹

The preservation of established right-wing organizations as distinct and influential entities might, the authorities too hoped, help stem the Nazi tide. A 1929 report from eastern Pomerania noted, for example, that the *Stahlhelm* remained a thriving organization in its own right, with branches still proliferating, even though it had in Nürnberg agreed a closer cooperation with the Nazi party. Some estate owners involved in the *Stahlhelm* were beginning to develop Nazi affinities, but other, moderate leaders were counted on to keep the group on the straight and narrow and to preserve it as a more harmless alternative to Nazism.¹⁶⁰ A strikingly similar report penned in the same region two years later expressed hope that moderate leaders within the *Stahlhelm* would be able

¹⁵⁶ "Das alte Lied," *Neumärkisches Volksblatt*, March 8, 1929. APP, Oddział w Pile, RPi, 647.

¹⁵⁷ "Betritt: Stahlhelmaufmarsch in Meseritz," July 9, 1930. APP, NPP, 171.

¹⁵⁸ "Betritt: Nationalsozialisten und Steuerstreikbewegung," April 4, 1929. LSH, Abt. 301, Nr. 4555.

¹⁵⁹ "ausgestochen habe," "Augen," "ins Lager des Stahlhelms und der dahinter stehenden Grenzschutz-Formation"; Letter, May 30, 1931. BArch, NS 22/1065.

¹⁶⁰ "Betritt: Gegen den Staat gerichtete Propaganda," August 31, 1929. APK, RK, 4364.

to curb Nazism's spread, despite the above-mentioned Nürnberg accord and some local *Stahlhelm* leaders' increasing attraction to Nazism.¹⁶¹ In Upper Silesia, moderate *Landbund* district leaders in 1929 answered government queries concerning Nazism's clout in their areas with promises to counter Nazi agitation should it occur, even as some fellow *Landbund* office holders themselves made anti-government propaganda.¹⁶² At times, the existence of healthy right-wing organizations did indeed hold back Nazism's expansion. In Schleswig-Holstein, for example, a 1930 report cited the province's *Landräte*, who, though police numbers admittedly suggested otherwise, attested that the Nazi party had not increased its membership numbers significantly in the first quarter of that year. In the three districts directly adjoining the border with Denmark, the report found, the NSDAP had by then taken root, but its membership remained small, which, the piece argued, might be due to the long-standing popularity there of the *Jungdeutscher Orden* and the *Volksnationale Reichsbewegung*. Besides, the document conjectured, long-established, "goal-oriented" cultural work in these districts, which state and municipalities supported and in which all segments of society participated, might have been lessening Nazism's appeal in comparison with districts elsewhere in the province, where such a vigorous, popular nationalist movement had not previously existed.¹⁶³ As late as December 1932, another report noted that the *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, which had been launched that summer, had failed to reach the expected circulation of 15,000 copies largely because the older, right-wing *Flensburger Generalanzeiger* had adopted a pro-Nazi line, even recruiting the disaffected co-founder of the *NS-Zeitung*. Despite Nazism's immense popularity in the province, the Nazi newspaper foundered, having attained a circulation of merely 6,000.¹⁶⁴ While most everywhere the Nazi party, perceived as the most potent champion of positions, including on border issues, that were widely shared

¹⁶¹ Letter to the *Regierungspräsident* in Köslin, November 2, 1931. APK, RK, 4368.

¹⁶² Report, August 1929. APO, NPO, 990.

¹⁶³ "zielbewusste"; "Betrifft: Übersicht über die nationalsozialistische Bewegung im Regierungsbezirk Schleswig," April 26, 1930. LSH, Abt. 301, Nr. 4557.

¹⁶⁴ "Betrifft: N.S.D.A.P.," December 3, 1932. LSH, Abt. 309, Nr. 22700.

among the right, was eclipsing older associations by the 1930s, in some few, highly local settings those established organizations retained enough popular loyalty and vigor to hold Nazism's spread back.

The government treated these older organizations with the same apprehension as it did the Nazis, aware of the problems their excesses could cause internationally and therefore working to forestall them. It has, for example, already been touched on that the local *Landrat* successfully defused the potential for confrontation when the *Stahlhelm* planned a large borderland rally in the Border Province's Zakrzewo. Initially, he appealed to the local *Stahlhelm* leader, but was rebuffed with the explanation that the event had been instigated by the *Gau* and that he therefore had no authorization to cancel it. The *Stahlhelm* chair furthermore noted that he was not able to guarantee that his men would maintain their peaceful conduct if Polish bystanders failed to take off their hats for the German anthem, thereby indicating that the demonstration was intended to be provocative. Having thus become aware of the consciously confrontational nature of the event, the *Landrat* phoned up Polish nationalist leader Domanski, resident in the village, who agreed to instruct Polish inhabitants to stay off the streets on the day of the *Stahlhelm* gathering. Thanks to the intervention of the *Landrat*, the march took place without incident in a deserted village.¹⁶⁵ In that same year, the Border Province's *Oberpräsident* issued a directive enjoining that in future no rallies, at which anti-Polish comments could be expected, were to be permitted within earshot or sight of the Polish border.¹⁶⁶ As late as February 1934, the Border Province's regional SA chief Arno Manthey was asked to remind the SA and SS that marches were not permissible within ten kilometers of the border, after one such parade had taken place in Schwenten, just three kilometers from the borderline.¹⁶⁷ In February of that year, the *Regierungspräsident* further requested that Manthey issue a decree against the singing of anti-Polish songs,

¹⁶⁵ Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 333-334.

¹⁶⁶ Copy of the order, August 19, 1930. APK, Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie, 275.

¹⁶⁷ Order, February 27, 1934. APP, NPP, 169.

which the SA had done on four recent occasions. Such practices after all hampered the Hitler regime's rapprochement with Poland, which the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of January 1934 had formalized.¹⁶⁸

Where violence and intimidation did occur, the authorities often set out to deny or downplay the incidents. In the German response to a Polish round-up of anti-Polish incidents in Prussia in the last quarter of 1930, for instance, the *Stahlhelm* attack on the school festival in Oslawdamerow was, like all the other listed episodes, dismissed as Polish invention. The party, the memorandum claimed, had been delayed by heavy rain, not by the *Stahlhelm* men, who had in any case supposedly arrived before its start and not in reaction to it. They had, furthermore, allegedly not caused any property damage and the police, contrary to Polish accusations of neglectfulness, had dutifully prevented clashes, the report professed. Oslawdamerow's Poles, in contrast, had during the departure of the *Stahlhelm* from the village insulted Germany through word and gesture. They had, moreover, exaggeratedly publicized the episode in the Polish press without ever making a formal complaint about it to the German police. Judicial proceedings against the *Stahlhelm* had therefore, the authorities declared, been abandoned.¹⁶⁹ In the same document, the government tried to allay concerns over an order the regional *Stahlhelm* leader for Eastern Pomerania had issued. The directive had instructed *Stahlhelm* groups to monitor Polish rallies in Pomerania's border region, but once he had been made aware by them of the legally problematic nature of this decree, the authorities maintained, he had followed it up with an explanatory guideline that substantially tempered the original edict. Although the *Stahlhelm* had thus been reined in, Polish organizations had subsequently in their turn called for the surveillance of German activism on their side of the border, unnecessarily unnerving the German minority

¹⁶⁸ "An den SA-Beauftragten für den Reg.Bez. Grenzmark P.-W.," April 19, 1934. APP, NPP, 169.

¹⁶⁹ "Denkschrift über Vorfälle angeblich terroristischen Charakters gegen die polnische Minderheit in Preußen aus der Zeit vom 1. September bis 31. Dezember 1930." APO, NPO, 109.

there.¹⁷⁰ The following year, the complaint about *Stahlhelm* men who had sung *Siegreich wollen wir Polen schlagen* and shouted “Down with Poland” while cycling along the border near Silesian Lukasine was likewise minimized. Protest had been lodged by a certain Klose, who operated a tavern adjacent to the German side of the border and who averred that a customs official over in Poland had overheard the commotion. Klose affirmed that the agitated Polish bureaucrat had remarked that such behavior from the Germans suited Poland well given that a League of Nations summit was coming up. Instead of Klose's testimony, though, German authorities privileged that of a local German customs official, who affirmed that the *Stahlhelm* men, though they had indeed sung and shouted, had been well out of earshot of Poland. It was only Klose himself, the official said, who had been ruffled.¹⁷¹ Since the *Stahlhelm* men in question could no longer be traced, the organization's local leader pledged to prevent similar occurrences in the future, and sources in Eastern Upper Silesia confirmed that the episode had not caused a stir there, the investigation was dropped.¹⁷² This pattern of making light of anti-Polish incidents was not a phenomenon only of the early 1930s, though, but had already taken hold years earlier. In 1925, for instance, a group of Upper Silesian youths were ambushed by *Heimattreue* for singing Polish songs as they walked, without the police coming to their aid, according to the *Katolik Codzienny*. The authorities, however, maintained that the police had known nothing of the supposed incident and that the Poles had once more not made it aware of the affair before going public. Even if anything had happened, further pursuing the *Katolik's* accusation was not held to be “in the public interest,” for the German passers-by would after all have felt “justified indignation” at the young Poles' singing.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the four Polish youths' testimonies in any case

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ “Betrifft: Angebliche Provozierung durch Angehörige des Stahlhelms längs der deutsch-polnischen Grenze bei Lukasine,” January 7, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹⁷² “Betrifft: Provozierung durch Stahlhelmlaute,” January 24, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹⁷³ “öffentlichen Interesse,” “berechtigten Unwillen”; Report, [1925]. GStA PK I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

differed too greatly to prove that anything remiss had occurred.¹⁷⁴ When a theatre performance in nearby Wieschowa was purportedly interrupted and then dispersed with shouts of “Heil Front” and renditions of *Siegreich wollen wir Polen schlagen* the next year, the official inquiry held that the disruption of the play had been caused by a drunken guest of the tavern where the play was being staged. While he had been rowdy, he had not, however, made anti-Polish remarks. After the performance's end, *Stahlhelm* men had sung the German anthem, but they had not disturbed the play itself, shouted “Heil Front,” or sung anything anti-Polish.¹⁷⁵ Overall, the *Narod* was right when it wryly observed that the German people and its government strove to portray minorities’ situation as favorable and cases of violence and harassment, where they were admitted to have occurred at all, as exceptions.¹⁷⁶

While many government reports remained for internal purposes only, some investigations were part of multilateral consultations about the incidents concerned. This was the case, for example, for the German government's response to the Polish survey of anti-Polish incidents in Prussia in the last quarter of 1930, which treated the Oslawdamerow episode and the controversial *Stahlhelm* order to surveil Polish rallies. The spontaneous rally that had taken place in the Border Province after a nearby village's *Stahlhelm* group visited Gross Peterkau's shooting range also gave rise to discussions between local German and Polish officials. An investigation into the episode was initiated by the office of the starost in the adjacent Polish county of Chojnice, but his telegram inviting German district officials to the deliberations arrived late, such that only the responsible divisional head from the police department could be sent. The conference he attended in the end reportedly found that no border violation could be said to have

¹⁷⁴ “Betrifft: Angeblicher Ueberfall auf Polen in Miechowitz, Kreis Beuthen O/S am 20. September 1925,” November 6, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹⁷⁵ “Betrifft: Beschwerde vom 10. Mai 1926 - Aktenzeichen: 49.26/1897 - Theateraufführung in Wieschowa.,” May 28, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹⁷⁶ “Die Taktik der Behörden gegenüber der polnischen Minderheit,” *Narod*, December 13, 1927, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, December 17, 1927. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 274.

occurred, since the *Stahlhelm* men, whose impromptu rally had taken place in a forested area far away from any roads that crossed the border, could not have known that Poles would be within earshot. They had thus not intended to provoke. The German district administration, for its part, could not have known of what was after all a spontaneous event more than a kilometer distant from the village center, it was apparently agreed. Besides, the *Stahlhelm* men's armbands had read simply "*Stahlhelm, Grabau branch*," not "With God for the fatherland against Poland" as the original complaint had averred, it was concluded.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the cancellation of an Eastertide religious Polish play due to a *Selbstschutz* leader's alleged threats towards the tavern owner, in whose hall it was to be held, made it all the way before the Mixed Commission for Upper Silesia. An initial German report denied that threats had been the cause of the performance's calling off, claiming that the tavern owner, in whose hall the play was to be staged, had come to fear trouble of his own accord when he overheard young, drunken Germans "remark disparagingly" about the upcoming event.¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, the German authorities brought in various witnesses for interview, bidden by the chairman of the Mixed Commission, who was inclined to believe the Polish account of the episode, to identify the *Selbstschutz* man in question. One of these, a certain Klyszcz, corroborated the German version of events.¹⁷⁹ Klyszcz, who claimed not to belong to the *Selbstschutz*, told the investigators that he had discussed the indignation about the Polish performance he had observed among the villagers with fellow guests in the tavern, which was how its owner had learned of the local umbrage. He had, however, never threatened anyone, Klyszcz maintained. This story was confirmed by the tavern owner himself, though a Polish clergyman testified that he had heard from the theatre troupe's leader that Klyszcz had threatened that the *Selbstschutz* would storm the tavern if the performance went

¹⁷⁷ "Mit Gott fürs Vaterland gegen Polen," "Stahlhem, Ortsgruppe Grabau"; "Betrifft: Grenzzwischenfall bei Gr. Peterkau," July 12, 1932. APP, NPP, 172.

¹⁷⁸ "abfällig geäußert"; Report, [1926]. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹⁷⁹ "Représentation théâtrale polonaise à Biskupitz," [1926]. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 85,6 Nr. 762.

ahead. The troupe's head himself, though, only spoke of menacing letters that the tavern owner had allegedly mentioned to him.¹⁸⁰ The balance of the testimonies led the Commission to find in Germany's favor in the end, though it stressed that due to the anti-Polish atmosphere in Germany Poles understandably easily suspected threats.¹⁸¹

Despite the German government routinely shielding the radical right, including the Nazi movement, in its anti-minority outbursts, it was routinely derided by these militants as biased against the right and as resultantly too hard on it judicially. After the theatre riot in Oppeln, in which Nazis, *Stahlhelm* men, and German National journalists were jointly implicated, for instance, the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* railed at republican papers for disparagingly labeling the rioters rowdies, deserving of strict punishment, when they in contrast always mustered sympathy for leftist culprits.¹⁸² Rehabilitation, the *Tageszeitung* decried in another piece on the riot, was the maxim of contemporary penal philosophy, which the republicans subscribed to, except where far-right offenders were concerned, even though harsh punishment only risked deepening their "fanaticism" and making them nationalist "martyrs for Germandom."¹⁸³ In actuality, far-right perpetrators were shown considerable leniency. Even the Potempa murderers' sentence was commuted less than two weeks after it was handed down and the offenders in more minor incidents fared better yet. Most of those who had participated in the attack on the state prosecutor in Jedwabno went free, with the instigators sentenced only to fines.¹⁸⁴ In Oppeln, the editor of the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, Dr. Knaak, was acquitted of incitement after the theatre riot there,¹⁸⁵ as were most of those who had

¹⁸⁰ "Betrifft: Bericht des Katolik Codzienny über angeblichen brutalen deutschen Terror in Biskupitz," May 6, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹⁸¹ Minutes of the session of the Mixed Commission, June 19, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 762.

¹⁸² "Die Oppelner 'Schwerverbrecher': Deutsche Fanatiker sind besser als Landesverräter," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, May 1, 1929. APO, NPO, 266.

¹⁸³ "treibt sie ja in einen weit stärkeren Fanatismus hinein", "Märtyrer des Deutschtums"; "Das politische Urteil von Oppeln," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, June 6, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁸⁴ "Das Urteil im Jedwabno-Prozeß," *Preußische Zeitung*, February 5, 1932. MOB.

¹⁸⁵ "Dr. Knaak wiederum freigesprochen!," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, September 22, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

participated in the assault on the performers at the train station.¹⁸⁶ Some few were sentenced to short prison terms, as were those who had thrown stink bombs during the play, though the latter's punishment was reduced to fines between fifty and seventy marks on appeal.¹⁸⁷ The judges¹⁸⁸ and even one of the state prosecutors in these Oppeln trials openly acknowledged sympathy for the perpetrators' nationalist motivations.¹⁸⁹ In Ortelsburg too, the ringleader of the scuffle at the local hotel with the visiting Czechoslovak students, who were presumed to be Polish, received only a 250 mark fine, for though he had committed unauthorized assumption of authority by checking the guests' passports and had acted in a way that had the potential to harm official foreign policy, his nationalist motives were considered an extenuating factor.¹⁹⁰ On appeal, he was absolved altogether.¹⁹¹

Besides pardoning and downplaying far-right intimidation of minorities, the German government also funneled substantial amounts of cash to right-wing, irredentist organizations along the new borders. To ethnic German associations abroad, it did so through intermediate organizations. Domestically, nationalist groups regularly appealed to the state for funds. The members' magazine of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner Bund* and the *Verband der Vereine Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger* received substantial official subsidies, with the Prussian ministry of the interior granting the latter at least 10,000 marks over the course of a twenty-two-month span between 1926 and 1928.¹⁹² In 1925,

¹⁸⁶ "Das Urteil im Oppelner Prozeß," *Oberschlesische Volkstimme*, October 13, 1929. APO, NPO, 267; "Unglaublich harte Strafen im Oppelner Prozeß," *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, October 15, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁸⁷ "Ein Triumph der Hitlerleute über die Gerechtigkeit," *Polska Zachodnia*, August 10, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁸⁸ "Die 'Oppelner Vorfälle' abgeurteilt," *Oppelner Nachrichten*, June 4, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁸⁹ "Dumme Jungen und milde Richter," *Vorwärts*, June 5, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

¹⁹⁰ Verdict, [September 1930]. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

¹⁹¹ Verdict in appeal, May 23, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 C, 67b.

¹⁹² "Betrifft: Unterstützung des Verbandes der Vereine heimattreuer Nordschleswiger," October 29, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 171; Letter to the Prussian minister of the interior, December 30, 1926. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 171; Letter to the *Verband der Vereine Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger*, June 7, 1927. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 171; Letter to the Prussian

the *Vereinigte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier* likewise urgently requested money from the Prussian interior ministry for its advice centers for refugees from now-Polish Eastern Upper Silesia. Underfunded and understaffed as they currently were, the group wrote, the centers could not provide the care required to prevent disgruntled refugees from turning to “radical organizations.”¹⁹³

Despite this support for right-wing associations' irredentist struggle, the government was also frequently accused of sidelining the borderlands. In 1926, for instance, a professor delivering the keynote lecture to a *Grenzland* conference in Oppeln, which was attended by local civil servants as well as by leaders of the *Stahlhelm* and the *Landeschützen*, contended not only that Mathias Erzberger had in his day told a French guest of his that no Eastern German could be permitted to achieve an elevated government position but also that visiting foreign commissions were intentionally never shown Eastern Germany.¹⁹⁴ Later, the Nazis voiced many similar complaints. After the Oppeln theatre riot, for example, Nazi speaker Max Filusch accused the government of promising the Poles five million marks for cultural events as compensation, when all the while “[n]othing though is done for Germandom.”¹⁹⁵ In early 1930, meanwhile, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* charged that that province had been excluded from borderland aid by the *Reichsrat*, with the votes of the Prussian delegates who supposedly represented the region, because Nazism was so popular there.¹⁹⁶ The *Reichstag* election that took place later that year provided fuel for further conflicts over the borderlands' putative willful neglect when chancellor Brüning toured Eastern Pomerania a few months afterwards. The right already interpreted the haste of the trip, which allowed the

minister of the interior, April 3, 1928. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 171; Letter to the *Verband der Vereine Heimattreuer Nordschleswiger*, August 4, 1928. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 171.

¹⁹³ “radikale Organisationen”; Copy of a letter to the Prussian minister of the interior, January 5, 1925. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 393.

¹⁹⁴ “Betrifft die am 28. Juni d. Js. in Oppeln stattgefundene Grenzlandtagung,” June 30, 1926. APO, NPO, 990.

¹⁹⁵ “Für das Deutschtum wird aber nichts gemacht.”; Report, June 21, 1929. APO, RO, 1800.

¹⁹⁶ “Die Peitsche für Schleswig-Holstein,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 25, 1930. SHLB.

chancellor only to visit each town for an hour or two, as a signifier of disinterest.¹⁹⁷ It grew more incensed yet, however, when Brüning in answer to questions about the economic misery that in the East was generally held to be exacerbated by the impact of the post-war borders said that the 1930 election result had hampered the delivery of effective aid to the East. "Only if sources of error and inhibitions in the Eastern territories themselves did not frustrate relief measures" could they be effectual.¹⁹⁸ The gains of the Nazis had, or so Brüning's argument ran according to the *Schlauer Zeitung*, negatively affected Germany's credit and thereby prevented there being larger sums of money available.¹⁹⁹ The residents of the Eastern marches were being blamed for their own hardship and abandonment by the political establishment, the same paper decried, just because they did not support Brüning's Center party. Had the ban on assemblies along Brüning's route perhaps been passed, it asked, so that he could avoid seeing Nazism's black flags?²⁰⁰

That that movement was a greater help to the borderlands than the government, republicans naturally denied. Repeatedly they warned that the sway Nazi gangs enjoyed there was hardly in the interest of the border areas, much like they had done when the lingering of bands of *Freikorps* fighters had underpinned the first Nazi boom in Upper Silesia in the early 1920s. Three documents from 1931 illustrate this republican concern. In March, *Reichstag* delegate Karl Bäcker, who was disturbed by the situation in Masurian Lyck, wrote to the Prussian interior minister. He had visited the small town four months previously and been beaten up, alongside friends from the German farm laborers' association, by Nazi youths. Now, he had received a letter from a friend in Lyck reporting that Nazis were parading through town in their brown shirts and staging

¹⁹⁷ "Blitzzug durch Ostpreußen," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 2, 1931. MOB.

¹⁹⁸ "wenn nicht Fehlerquellen und Hemmungen in den Ostgebieten selber die Hilfsmaßnahmen durchkreuzen"; "Die Kanzlerreise: Enttäuschung bei Nationalsozialisten und Hugenberg-Hetzern," *Vorwärts*, January 11, 1931. APS, NPS, 18.

¹⁹⁹ "Antwort auf Dr. Brüning's Rummelsbruger Rede," *Schlauer Zeitung*, January 7, 1931. APS, NPS, 18.

²⁰⁰ "Die innenpolitische Agitationsreise durch den außenpolitisch gefährdeten Osten," *Schlauer Zeitung*, January 7, 1931. APS, NPS, 18.

paramilitary exercises and courses. Such classes should be forbidden, Bäcker demanded, for they were threatening the "safety of the border areas" and taking place in a town that was after all the site of a Polish vice consulate.²⁰¹ The following month, the Upper Silesian *Volksblatt* reported on the foundation of a SA home in Beuthen. The paper called on Marxists to fight the establishment of this institution, which was sure to be used against them, but also on the government to do the same. After all, "particularly in the border districts there eminently exists an interest in preventing the formation of armed gangs."²⁰² In the summer, finally, the *Reichsbanner* held a rally in Rathsamnitz in Eastern Pomerania, the advertisement of which emphasized that a large turnout was important for showing the supporters of Hitler and Hugenberg that the organization was being vigilant. Demonstrating watchfulness would be of especial value as "[p]articularly our border area is a stomping ground for reactionaries of all shades."²⁰³ Therefore, "[w]e republicans in the border area have a particular duty to fulfill."²⁰⁴ Nazi activities, republicans agreed, dangerously undermined the authority of the state in its most vulnerable regions.

However, a considerable number of individual, lower-ranking civil servants in the borderlands were not republicans and hence joined the very Nazi movement that their employer, for all that it often self-interestedly protected German nationalist offenders against Polish accusations, sought to curb. Cases of officials with an affinity for Nazism were reported right from the republic's beginning, with the *Zgoda*, for example, alleging in 1923 that Upper Silesia's police was neglecting to mop up the *Freikorps* fighters that still plagued the region and its Polish-speakers because many policemen sympathized with the militants.²⁰⁵ In the fall of that same year, a note to the region's *Oberpräsident*

²⁰¹ "Sicherheit der Grenzgebiete"; Copy of letter, March 18, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 18, Lyck Nr. 3.

²⁰² "Übrigens liegt gerade in Grenzbezirken ein eminentes Interesse vor, Bandenbildung zu verhindern."; "Kasernierte Nazihorden," *Volksblatt*, April 15, 1931. APO, RO, 1802.

²⁰³ "Gerade unser Grenzgebiet ist der Tummelplatz für die Reaktionäre aller Schattierungen."; "Republikanische Kundgebung in Rathsdamnitz," *General-Anzeiger*, July 18, 1931. APS, NPS, 38.

²⁰⁴ "Wir Republikaner im Grenzgebiet haben daher eine besondere Pflicht zu erfüllen."; Ibid.

²⁰⁵ "Die Orgeschplage. Nächtliche Übergriffe der Hakenkreuzler." (copy), January 9, 1923. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 728.

reported on a hundred young, in some cases armed men, who had paraded with a large, wooden swastika through the village of Grottkau. The police's failure to intervene was attributed to its rapport with the marchers.²⁰⁶ Throughout the 1920s the Polish press in particular continued to depict the German authorities as in league with or, more often, willfully blind to far-right offences. By the early 1930s, such charges of complicity on the part of civil servants, especially on that of policemen, often revolved around Nazi excesses. In May 1932, for instance, the *Nowiny Codzienne* recounted how, in the run-up to the Prussian Diet election, Polish campaigners on their way to the Lower Silesian border village of Mittenwalde had spotted a band of Nazis. They sheltered in the forest to await the Nazis' next moves, but a customs official in league with the Nazis encountered them there. He asked them for their papers and then took them to the police station, with the Nazis following along and insulting the Poles. Once at the police station the customs official soon had to release the campaigners, as there were no actual grounds for holding them, but by then a crowd had gathered outside. This mob beat the Poles, calling them insurgents and following them all the way to the train station, where it attacked them once more.²⁰⁷ A year earlier, the *Oberschlesischer Volksbote* had similarly reported the perpetration of Nazi violence by customs officials, though then a fellow civil servant had been the hapless victim. Following a farewell party for a *Regierungsassessor* Dr. Würtz, a group of customs officials had drunkenly roamed the streets. One of them shouted "Heil Hitler" repeatedly, for which a passing policeman reprimanded him, pointing out that the customs official received his salary from the republic that Hitler opposed. In response, the customs official yelled that the Prussian prime minister could lick his ass and, together with his mates, set about beating the policeman. They then took the unfortunate officer to the police station, on the grounds that in the future Third Reich it would be he, not the Hitler-saluting customs official, who should be reported. They were, of course, promptly

²⁰⁶ Message to the *Oberpräsident*, November 9, 1923. APO, NPO, 989.

²⁰⁷ "150 gegen 7," *Nowiny Codzienne*, May 21, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, May 28, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

kicked out.²⁰⁸ When the *Volksbote* publicized the incident and demanded that Würtz, who had participated in the assault, be removed from his responsible government position, the police investigated. Naturally, the police officer and the customs officials gave contradictory evidence, but the accounts of those police officials present at the station when their colleague was brought in and the injuries he had had then confirmed the policeman's story.²⁰⁹ Other civil servants expressed their Nazi convictions in non-violent ways. Also in 1931, for example, the Kreuzburg magistrate exempted the local NSDAP branch's performance of the play *Sturm*, which was being staged in celebration of the Upper Silesian plebiscite's tenth anniversary, from the amusement tax because the proceeds were to fund youth and sports programming – even though that programming was avowedly propagandistic, rather than educational.²¹⁰ At that year's plebiscite commemoration in Kruppamühle, meanwhile, a *Gerichtsrat* gave a speech, which according to a report moved “in Nazi channels,” to an audience that included numerous children in Hitler Youth uniforms.²¹¹

Many civil servants not only sympathized with but outright joined the Nazi party, sometimes in leading positions. Josef Adamczyk, Upper Silesia's *Untergauleiter* and a teacher, is the prime example. A 1930 complaint to the *Oberpräsident* about his detrimental influence on his young charges recounted how Adamczyk held parades through town with them every Friday and quipped that he probably even taught them “Wotan worship.”²¹² Even though he was raising his pupils as National Socialists, Adamczyk, a refugee from Eastern Upper Silesia, retained his employment and additionally received so-called *Wartegeld*. Through the latter in particular the government itself was enabling him to devote his time to party agitation.²¹³ Various other

²⁰⁸ “Zollbeamte verprügeln und verhaften einen Polizeiwachtmeister,” *Oberschlesischer Volksbote*, August 3, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

²⁰⁹ Report by the police president, [August 1931]. APO, RO, 1805.

²¹⁰ Report by the Kronstadt city inspector, April 8, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

²¹¹ “im nationalsozialistischen Fahrwasser”; Report to the *Landrat*, March 22, 1931. APO, RO, 1802.

²¹² “Wotansan[betung]”; Letter, January 22, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

low-ranking civil servants, meanwhile, were to be found in the rank and file of the Nazi movement. Abel respondent Hubert Schummel, for instance, was born near Flatow, in the later Border Province, but was living in Potsdam by the end of the war, from where he, a police officer, was transferred for a year each to Upper Silesian Gleiwitz and Pomeranian Stolp. In Gleiwitz, he boasted, he became one of the co-founders of the NSDAP branch, which was well received by Upper Silesia's *völkisch* milieu. In Stolp, he participated in the local group's dissemination of Nazi propaganda in the surrounding countryside, all the way to "immediately before Poland's borders."²¹⁴ Erich Femke, meanwhile, came to Upper Silesia as a customs official, rising to the rank of *Oberzollsekretär* and joining the party in iconic Annaberg in 1930.²¹⁵ Nazi customs officials like Femke repeatedly called forth disapprobation and apprehensiveness among supervising authorities. The police office in Ratibor, for one, dedicated a 1931 report to "*Reich* civil servants as members of the NSDAP," because many civil servants there, particularly those working for the customs bureau and the state railways, belonged to the party "as members or strongly sympathizing followers."²¹⁶ While no railway employees were named, three customs officials were identified by name, of whom one sat on the party's local mediation committee and another had attended the recent opening of Oppeln's Brown House with his wife. More generally, the report observed, the party's Ratibor rallies routinely attracted many customs officials from throughout the district, possibly as the result of pressure by more senior staff on their subordinates.²¹⁷ In the preceding year, a similar report from Annaberg, in the same county, had also provided a list of local *Reich* civil servants with NSDAP membership, which consisted wholly of customs officials, five in

²¹⁴ "bis unmittelbar vor die Grenzen Polens"; Hubert Schummel, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58286/span-classqueryhlhubertspan-span-classqueryhlsc?ctx=814fec7a-f131-45ae-aab0-19ca5b63c8aa&idx=0>.

²¹⁵ Erich Femke, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58487/span-classqueryhlerichspan-span-classqueryhlfem?ctx=6adcec47-a72b-44f2-9956-6afeadd7a3fb&idx=0>.

²¹⁶ "als Mitglieder oder stark sympathisierende Anhänger"; "Betrifft: Reichsbeamte als Mitglieder der NSDAP.," October 10, 1931. APO, RO, 1805.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

all. Two of them had been Nazi candidates in the most recent municipal election and three sat on the NSDAP branch's entertainments committee.²¹⁸ It was prominent Center Party politician Carl Ulitzka, however, who kicked off the longest internal exchange about NSDAP membership among customs officials when he reported in July 1931 on the founding of an NSDAP chapter in the village of Koschwitz, two of whose most active members were the customs officials and SA members Skaba and Raabe. As Nazi agitation jeopardized the small border village's tranquility, Skaba should be transferred away from Koschwitz, Ulitzka appealed, as Raabe had already been.²¹⁹ A police investigation prompted by Ulitzka's protest found that it was true that Skaba and Raabe were involved in the Nazi movement. Raabe merely promoted it in conversation, while Skaba additionally subscribed to a Nazi newspaper, which he displayed in the pub. Nevertheless, it was not this political activism that had been the cause for Raabe's transfer, who, rather, had, as a *Versorgungsanwärter*, gotten a position with the postal service elsewhere for a time and was now back in Koschwitz. However, the investigation had discovered that a third customs commissar, Peitsch, from nearby Gowsdzian also actively supported the party and frequented Nazi rallies in the area. His subordinates were feared to be patronizing them too "to ensure the goodwill of their superior."²²⁰ In the past, there had been insufficient concrete evidence to officially report frequent Nazi activity on the part of customs and tax officials in Upper Silesia, but with this new evidence in hand, the police report concluded, intervention should now occur. Though the Prussian prohibition on civil servants' NSDAP and KPD membership did not apply to *Reich* civil servants, the document pointed out, it was, after all, nevertheless inappropriate for them to act in ways that threatened the state and sowed disquiet among the loyal population.

²¹⁸ "Betrifft: Ortsgruppe Annaberg, Krs. Ratibor, der NSDAP.," February 14, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

²¹⁹ "Betrifft: Beteiligung von Zollbeamten bei der N.S.D.A.P.," July 21, 1931. APO, RO, 1800.

²²⁰ "sich des Wohlwollens ihres Vorgesetzten zu vergewissern"; Report to the *Regierungspräsident*, September 19, 1931. APO, RO, 1800.

While in many of the above cases, the police investigated and tried to counteract civil servants' Nazism, the movement drew members from that branch of the government too. Hubert Schummel, as mentioned, was one such Nazi police officer. In Gleiwitz, his colleagues even founded the "Working Group of Nat. Soc. police officials," as the Nazi *Deutsche Ostfront* chronicled in an article on the group's second meeting, which had already attracted greater numbers than the first, including higher-ranking officials. In the rally's keynote speech, Member of the Prussian Diet Heukeshoven charged that the government had robbed the police of the "requisite nationalism" to act as an instrument of "national defense" and fulfill its role as "the vanguard of a great people's army" in the case of armed conflict with Poland.²²¹ Given the probability of such fighting, Heukeshoven declared, one could not in a borderland afford to accept a police president who indulged in "pacifist and Polish lines of thinking."²²² Instead, a police chief who knew what "national honor and dignity" demanded of him at the border was needed.²²³ As the Nazis were portrayed as the only "bearers of real national will," it was presumably a Nazi president Heukeshoven was calling for.²²⁴

Some were fired from the police for such expressions of Nazi commitment. At a 1931 rally with *Untergauleiter* Adamczyk in Ratibor, for instance, a certain Faber sounded off during question time, telling how he had worked for the police after serving in the army at Upper Silesia's Polish and Czech borders. As a police officer, he said, he had come to realize that NSDAP rallies were only being supervised in order to gather information about speakers that would make it possible to arrest them. Having evidently developed Nazi affinities, Faber had the previous year joined in the final "*Deutschland, erwache!*" at a meeting he was meant to be overseeing. Reported by his colleagues, he was suspended by the police president, a step that he, as a "front and *Selbstschutz*

²²¹ "notwendigen Nationalismus," "Landesverteidigung," "die Vorhut einer großen Volksarmee"; "Die Gleiwitzer Polizei wird nationalsozialistisch," *Deutsche Ostfront*, September 12, 1932. APO, RO, 1806.

²²² "pazifistischen und polnischen Gedankengängen"; Ibid.

²²³ "nationale Ehre und Würde"; Ibid.

²²⁴ "Träger wirklichen nationalen Willens"; Ibid.

fighter,” protested against.²²⁵ While his only semi-coherent rant oddly enough went on to grumble about being called a “Pollak” by colleagues and about the minority office’s inaction in response to his complaint, his Nazism, given the context in which he made these comments, is undeniable.²²⁶ Meanwhile, an April 1932 article recounted how the owner of a manor in the Border Province permitted Nazi rallies to take place on her property, including one attended by 500 uniformed SA men in the dead of night, and how she had taken in the district SA leader. This SA boss, the piece mentioned, had moved in after being dismissed from the police.²²⁷ While the numerical scope of the problem of Nazism among border areas’ civil servants is impossible to assess, it was sufficient to weigh on the administration, which saw its authority and principles disputed from within.

The government was indeed much questioned by the Nazi party and other far-right associations and derided by them as weak in the face of neighboring countries and of the international community. They, these groups averred, would act in a decisively more determined and intrepid fashion to regain Germany’s territory and standing. Nazi critiques and avowals of this kind differed little from those of their rivals. Though Nazis did occasionally try to depict their competitors as acting in contravention of their tough talk and rival groups in turn tried to distance themselves from a movement that was threatening to absorb the far-right milieu, the profound parallelisms in rhetoric and militant behavior about border and minority issues fundamentally fostered cooperation between them in the borderlands, particularly at the rank-and-file level. How Nazism, including its relationship with the German government, was viewed by non-Germans and ethnic Germans will be probed in the next chapter.

²²⁵ “Front- und Selbstschutzkämpfer”; “Betrifft: Polizeiliche Auflösung einer öffentlichen Versammlung der N.S.D.A.P. in Ratibor am 12. Januar 1931,” January 15, 1931. APO, RO, 1804.

²²⁶ “Pollak”; Ibid.

²²⁷ “Nächtlicher Nazi-Spuk im Kreise Schlochau,” *Die Grenzwatch*, April 7, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 84a, Nr. 53569.

Nazis, Non-Germans, and Ethnic Germans

Whereas the preceding chapter surveyed how the Nazi party and German audiences within that country interacted with one another, this one considers how minorities as well as German nationals on the other side of the new borders regarded the ascendant movement. Famously, the latter yearned for a return *Heim ins Reich* and therefore later enthusiastically welcomed the annexation first of the Sudetenland and then of the Wartheland, Danzig-West Prussia, and Eastern Upper Silesia. In North Schleswig, which was never incorporated into the Third Reich, many German residents hoped for such an outcome until the Second World War's end. Before the Nazis' take-over of power, however, the view of Nazism held by ethnic Germans in these regions was more equivocal. Certainly, some looked to the Nazi movement as ethnic Germans' most effective and forceful advocate within Germany and potentially their liberators down the line. Such a perspective could facilitate close relationships between NSDAP chapters in the German borderlands and like-minded groups across the borders. Other ethnic Germans, however, viewed with skepticism Nazism's militancy, its undermining of the established nationalist organizations that had thus far maintained the ties between Germany and the German minorities abroad, and its shallow understanding of the circumstances in which ethnic Germans lived and conducted their activism. For the propagandists of ethnic minorities within Germany, meanwhile, Nazism's utility lay mainly in the ability to use invocations of its pugnacious methods as justification for their movements' failure to flourish in the relatively liberal, permissive environment that was the Weimar republic. In this quest for rationalizations, Nazism was portrayed as the true, bared face of all Germandom and moderate forces within Germany were usefully tarred with the same radical nationalist brush. Only rarely did activists advocate – and then often only half-heartedly – that minority members stand with the republic against the movement that threatened that state and the minorities both.

In the decade since the First World War, ethnic minorities had witnessed a steep decline in their vote shares and the anxiety surrounding this development shaped their engagement with Nazism. In Upper Silesia's *Landkreis* Oppeln, for instance, the Polish Catholic People's Party, which had won over two-thirds of votes in some of the district's villages before the war, still garnered twenty-three and twenty-five percent in the two *Reichstag* elections of 1924. By 1930, however, it only received 14.4 percent and it continued to decline to 5.7 percent in July 1932 and 4.6 percent in November of that year.¹ The Danish *Schleswigsche Verein* fared equally badly. An article about the November 1929 election to the district of Schleswig's *Kreistag* recorded side-by-side the Danish votes in that election and in the preceding one of 1925 for a number of villages. The decreases in Kropp from thirty-nine to four Danish votes and in Süderstapel from twenty-five to seven were just the starkest exemplars of a trend that affected all but two of the listed villages.² Writing about Upper Silesia, Brendan Karch has attributed this downturn to the Weimar Republic's granting of wide-ranging liberties to its minorities regarding language use, particularly within schools and churches. Satisfied with these rights, the Polish-speaking, nationally indifferent segment of the populace abandoned a Polish nationalist movement that prior to the First World War had held attraction largely as a party of protest. In the absence of concrete causes for complaint, Upper Silesians were reluctant to embrace high-commitment nationalism.³ A similar development appears to have transpired in Schleswig. Eastern Upper Silesia's *Polonia*, edited by Wojciech Korfanty, was alone, however, in acknowledging at the time that radical brands of nationalism might simply not resonate with voters and in urging a minority leadership

¹ Brendan Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 176.

² "Kreistag Schleswig: Sechs Nazis!," *Der Schleswiger*, November 18, 1929. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

³ Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 176-178.

beholden to the Polish reactionary-nationalist regime, which Korfanty opposed, to take a good look at itself and at what it had to offer minorities.⁴

Instead of facing changes in the political dynamic head-on, however, the minority parties simply tried to get voters perceived as national renegates back on the nationalist track. Before the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections, for instance, the Upper Silesian *Nowiny Codzienne* charged that any Polish-speaker who failed to vote, at all or for the Polish party, was committing treason by their people and their religion.⁵ In a different piece, the paper urged its readers to remember to follow “the voice of your conscience,” which was presumed to impel them to vote Polish.⁶ Casting a vote for the Polish party, the article explained, was never a waste but rather an important stand against Germanization. The Danish *Schleswiger* similarly ran a feature expounding “Why you should always vote Danish, therefore also now on April 24, 1932” before that year's Prussian Diet election, which likewise emphasized that the ballot should be used to express belonging to the Danish people, not to take a stand on economic and ideological disputes that “the Prussians” were best left to settle among themselves.⁷ The failure to abide by such enjoinders was lambasted in the wake of the July *Reichstag* election in another Danish paper, which reserved especial ire for parents who sent their children to Danish schools but did not vote Danish. They were, the journal bristled, using Danish resources without supporting the Danish cause where it really mattered, namely at the ballot box.⁸ As late as March 1934, the Border Province's *Głos Pogranicza*, in an article about Polish-speaking school children who supposedly took part in “Hitlerian divisions” that sang anti-Polish songs, depicted Polish-speakers who participated in German political life as “renegates”

⁴ “Die Niederlage der Polen im Oppelner Schlesien,” *Polonia*, April 26, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

⁵ “Alle unter das Banner der polnisch-katholischen Volkspartei,” *Nowiny Codzienne*, July 24, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, July 30, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁶ “Polnisches Volk! Lass die Stimme deines Gewissens nicht betäuben!,” *Nowiny Codzienne*, July 20, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, July 27, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

⁷ “die Preussen”; “Warum Du immer dänisch wählen sollst also auch jetzt am 24. April. 1932,” *Der Schleswiger*, April 14, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

⁸ “Grenzpolitische Wochenschau,” *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, August 10, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

who misguidedly determinedly tried to pass for German, because they falsely believed Poles to be "people of second class" in Germany rather than citizens with all the same rights.⁹

Besides on renegates' perfidy, the decline of organized minority nationalist movements was blamed on German repression. Nazism, however, was considered no more oppressive than "any other German party," in Karch's telling.¹⁰ In fact, Karch has argued, Nazism's racial essentialism offered minority activists hope by promising an end to nationalist competition and assimilation, which were not consistent with this Nazi worldview and on the losing side of which minorities were finding themselves.¹¹ However, besides the few press snippets cited by Karch there is little documentation of the hope putatively put in Nazism's essentialist racism. Of all the sources I looked at, only the 1934 article about school children joining in anti-Polish songs requested that the German authorities put a stop to such renegade behavior because anyone who engaged in it violated the "injunctions of their *Führer*."¹² In contrast, examples of Nazism being invoked by minority activists as an existential threat abound. Following the July 1932 *Reichstag* election, for instance, the *Flensburg Avis* speculated that voters had been scared into voting against their Danish inclinations by the presence of small groups of Nazi toughs outside rural polling stations.¹³ Many such tales of Nazi intimidation, discredited officialdom by linking it to Nazis' evidently ignominious excesses. In the compendia of electoral violence routinely published by Polish newspapers to bring home the inevitability of the minority's electoral failures, reports of minor anti-Polish acts

⁹ "Hitlerische Abteilungen," "Renegaten," "ein Mensch zweiter Klasse"; "Gegen das öffentliche Singen polenfeindlicher Lieder," *Głos Pogranicza*, March 29, 1934, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, April 6, 1934. APP, NPP, 169.

¹⁰ Karch, *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland*, 182.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

¹² "Anordnungen seines Führers"; "Gegen das öffentliche Singen polenfeindlicher Lieder," *Głos Pogranicza*, March 29, 1934, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, April 6, 1934. APP, NPP, 169.

¹³ "Grenzpolitische Wochenschau," *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*, August 10, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

committed by civil servants were mixed in, as if equivalent, with tales of much more severe Nazi and *Stahlhelm* misbehavior. Police officers, bureaucrats, and judges were furthermore accused - in these compilations of violence as well as in articles dedicated to individual noteworthy episodes like those in Glumen, Jedwabno, and Oppeln - of having failed to handle Nazi violence with the necessary promptness and severity either on scene or afterwards. Even though the Nazis had placed Poles above even Communists on their "blacklist," even the *Polonia* asserted, violence against them was not seriously being "taken action against."¹⁴

Not just individual officials but the attitudes of parties and governments more generally were, Polish propaganda made out, smoothing the way for far-right movements. The strength of the *Stahlhelm*, for instance, was blamed on public school teachers' nationalist outlook and on the federal government's *Ostpolitik* by the *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* on the occasion of the 1931 *Stahlhelmtag* in Breslau.¹⁵ The Germanizing policies implemented in public schools and from church pulpits were similarly said by the *Nowiny Codzienne* to have been responsible for the greater rise in NSDAP and KPD votes than in Polish ones in the 1930 *Reichstag* election. Only such manipulation could, the paper maintained, drive the innately Polish voters of Upper Silesia into the arms of Germany's most radical parties instead of into those of their natural Polish nationalist political home.¹⁶ After the same election, the *Polska Zachodnia* too claimed that not only the "organized militants of the Hitlerites and Communists, who had everywhere tried to terrorize our compatriots," but rather "the German population and even individual civil servants" also had "been against the Polish population in the current elections."¹⁷ "The

¹⁴ "Der Terror der Hitler-Leute gegenüber den Polen im Oppelner Schlesien," *Polonia*, August 22, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, August 31, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

¹⁵ Copy of an article from the *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, June 6, 1931. APO, NPO, 998.

¹⁶ "Die Gefahr des Nationalismus und des Kommunismus," *Nowiny Codzienne*, October 11, 1930, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, October 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1880.

¹⁷ "die deutsche Bevölkerung und sogar einzelne Beamte sind bei den gegenwärtigen Wahlen gegen die polnische Bevölkerung gewesen, abgesehen schon von den organisierten Stosstrupplern der Hitler-Leute und Kommunisten, die überall versucht hatten, unsere Landsleute zu terrorisieren"; "Ein schändlicher

attitude of the authorities," of other official circles, and of the German press was, through its buttressing of the stance of those many Germans who sought to eradicate any "national particularism" in their country, furthermore held responsible by the Union of Poles for the persistence of Nazi and *Stahlhelm* terror inside but also outside election seasons.¹⁸ A Nazi rally with the defense attorneys of the perpetrators of the violence against the Katowice theatre troupe in Oppeln, as a "public glorification of the attackers" and a "public invitation to further anti-Polish violent deeds," was, the *Polska Zachodnia* curiously charged, a taste of "the era of the 'liberal' government of *Oberpräsident* Lukaschek."¹⁹

People and parties who had no connection with Nazism were thus, like Lukaschek, brought into disrepute by linking them, however spuriously or vaguely, to the movement, a trend that was particularly noticeable in the run-up to elections. The *Nowiny Codzienne* article that proclaimed those who neglected to vote Polish in the impending July 1932 *Reichstag* treasonous, for instance, underlined the imperativeness of doing so by describing a recent 4,000-strong Nazi march through Gleiwitz. The declaration that not just the Nazi party with its radical nationalism but indeed all German parties were undeserving of Poles' electoral support was simply tacked on, with the governing Center and Social Democratic parties denounced for the increase in assimilationist policies they enacted so as not to lose ground to the right and the Communists for their anti-religious Bolshevism.²⁰ The *Polonia* likewise charged in June 1932 that the right pursued Germanization through militancy, the Center from the pulpit, and the Social Democrats

preussischer Terror gegenüber den Polen im Opper Schlesien," *Polska Zachodnia*, October 13, 1930. APO, NPO, 109.

¹⁸ "Haltung der Behörden," "nationalen Partikularismus"; Complaint by the Union of Poles to the League of Nations. APO, NPO, 111.

¹⁹ "Die öffentliche Glorifizierung der Schläger und die öffentliche Aufforderung zu weiteren polenfeindlichen Gewalttaten, das sind eine neue Probe der Aera der 'liberalen' Regierung des Oberpräsidenten Lukaschek im Opper Schlesien.;" "Die Glorifizierung der Terroristen. Die Opper Haktisten 'ehrten' die polenfeindlichen Schläger," *Polska Zachodnia*, August 16, 1929. APO, NPO, 267.

²⁰ "Alle unter das Banner der polnisch-katholischen Volkspartei," *Nowiny Codzienne*, July 24, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, July 30, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

through their emphasis on the “unity of the proletariat.”²¹ “Today the Hitlerites have taken up the initiative in an already open fight against the Polish element, a ruthless fight waged with the most extreme methods,” the paper went on, “and independently of them so have the liberalizing nationalist circles.”²² The specific development treated in the remainder of the article was a bill against Polonization from the pulpit that the Nazi Diet delegates had introduced. A story in the same journal before that year's Diet election about the car of a Polish speaker that had crashed after driving over a nail-studded plank, ostensibly placed on the road by Nazis, similarly moved beyond castigations only of Nazism to aver that the Nazis through terror, the Center Party through the “misuse of religion and the church” for the spreading of Germandom, and the government through undue scrutiny of Polish campaigners all worked to create an image of an Upper Silesia unmarred by Polish-ness.²³ Articles opportunistically tied all parties to the Nazi extremism they were written to protest.

This conscious propagandistic instrumentalization of Nazi excesses to bring not just that party but Germany more generally into disrepute is most remarkably illustrated by plans made by the Polish consul in Oppeln in the aftermath of the 1929 theatre riot there. The testimony of musicians Wende and Langer, which corroborated that the theatre troupe's leadership had pressured members into overstating the damage done to them and their instruments, had made clear that Poles intended to take as much advantage of the misfortune that had befallen the performers as possible. In this spirit, the consul proposed to put together a brochure about the incident. The trials that came out of the episode had produced much material, not only about the riot itself but also, he claimed, about the

²¹ “Einheit des Proletariats”; “Polenfeindliche Offensive in Deutschland. Angriffe auf die polnische Geistlichkeit. Bestrebungen zur Liquidation des polnischen Schulwesens im Grenzgebiet,” *Polonia*, June 10, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, June 18, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

²² “Heute haben die Initiative eines schon offenen Kampfes mit dem polnischen Element, eines rücksichtslosen und mit den äußersten Mitteln geführten Kampfes die Hitlerleute aufgenommen und unabhängig von ihnen die liberalisierenden nationalistischen Kreise.”; *Ibid.*

²³ “Mißbrauch der Religion und der Kirche”; “Unter dem preußischen Stiefel. Ein barbarischer Anschlag der Hitlerleute auf ein Automobil mit polnischen Referenten.” (translation), *Polska Zachodnia*, April 17, 1932. APO, NPO, 112.

backdrop of Germans' anti-Polish attitudes against which it had occurred. Published, the consul argued, this material would provide readers with an accurate - that is, Polish nationalist slanted - picture of the disturbance at Oppeln and of German Upper Silesian society.²⁴ The chapter plan devised by the consul would have seen the booklet open with an introduction about the Oppeln episode's "genesis" and the disputed performance's significance for Polish cultural life in the region, followed by a series of chapters on the German government's, the press', and the League of Nation's responses to the violence, on the subsequent trials, and on press coverage of these.²⁵ In order to obscure that the pamphlet originated in the consulate, it was to be published by the local Union of Poles, which had already expressed its willingness. A print run of 500 German and Polish copies each was to be released, with detailed summaries to be made available in English and French.²⁶ This ambitious plan came to naught because the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw deemed it good but, at a projected cost of 1,500 marks, too expensive.²⁷ Nevertheless, it stands as an exemplification of the tendency to purposefully implicate all Germans in the anti-Polish misdeeds of the right fringe. With the government's approach of counting on "the gradual pulling across of Polish-speaking segments of the population into the German *Kulturkreis*" apparently triumphing over minorities' nationalist activism, the republic and republican parties had to be represented as Polish-speakers' enemy even in the absence of much actual cause for complaint.²⁸ The attribution of Nazi violence to a belligerently anti-Polish atmosphere fostered by the authorities in this proposed pamphlet, as in various newspaper articles about other violent episodes, was therefore arguably not meant literally or, as Karch suggests, to relativize the scourge that was Nazism but rather to tar German government and society with the same extremist brush.

²⁴ Report, October 30, 1929. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 14.

²⁵ "Genese"; Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Letter, December 7, 1929. AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, 14.

²⁸ "das allmähliche Herüberziehen der polnischsprechender Bevölkerungskreise in den deutschen Kulturkreis"; Letter, February 8, 1931. APO, NPO, 110.

Since the republic was routinely deprecated and all parties portrayed as equal threats to the minorities, at election time minority members were urged to vote for minority parties or not at all. Before the first round of the 1932 presidential elections, for example, several Polish papers pronounced that Poles had no civic duty to vote in it. After all, the *Głos Pogranicza* explained, there was no Polish candidate, as there were in *Reichstag* or Diet contests. Rather, all contenders were Germans and none offered any guarantees of Polish rights. If readers really felt impelled to vote, Hindenburg was grudgingly recommended, but it was strongly implied that no such responsibility to vote obtained.²⁹ The *Nowiny Codzienne* concurred that Poles had no obligation to vote and likewise half-heartedly commended Hindenburg to readers, should they nevertheless choose to do so. Though “chauvinism” and “chicaneries” had proliferated under his reign,³⁰ the paper wrote, he was the candidate of the republic, which was a better underwriter at least of Polish liberties than Thälmann with his anti-religious Communism or Hitler and German Nationalist Düsterberg, the greatest enemies of the Poles.³¹ The *Polonia* went further, enjoining readers to either not vote at all or cast an empty ballot.³² In the run-up to the Prussian Diet election that took place the following month, meanwhile, the Danish minority paper *Der Schleswiger* argued that strategically voting for republican German parties would be counterproductive. To illustrate this standpoint, it printed a numerical example. If the usual 5,000 or so Danish votes were distributed among German parties, the journal conjectured, the Social Democrats would likely receive 3,000, the Communists 1,900, and the Nazis 100. What, however, if the Social Democrats needed 3,001, the Communists 1,901, but the Nazis only 99 additional votes

²⁹ “Vor der Wahl des Reichspräsidenten,” *Głos Pogranicza*, March 11, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 19, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

³⁰ “Chauvinismus,” “Schikanen”; “Wer von uns will, kann wählen... aber nur Hindenburg.” *Nowiny Codzienne*, March 5, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 12, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

³¹ “die größten Feinde der Polen”; Ibid.

³² “Die Sanierung für Hindenburg,” *Polonia*, March 6, 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*, March 12, 1932. APO, RO, 1882.

to win another seat? Rather than risk sending another Nazi delegate to the Diet, Danes should vote Danish. “No-,” the piece finished, “let the Prussians sort it out among themselves...”³³ The Social Democratic *Volkszeitung* was quick to criticize the *Schleswiger* for its reliance on an implausible numerical scenario and for the detachment toward the republic and its fate betrayed by the article. In reality, it pointed out, the danger of the Nazis securing an additional Diet seat was much greater if Danes engaged in “demonstrative” voting for a minority party that would likely gain no mandates anyway.³⁴ The minority could only afford to “make themselves foreigners” in the manner advocated by the *Schleswiger*, the *Volkszeitung* pointedly observed, while “the democratic form of government is secured through the republican parties.”³⁵ After all, the paper noted, “the persistence of a republican Germany is a requirement for life” for the Danish minority.³⁶ Danes could therefore not countenance withdrawing from German politics at a time when the election promised to reflect a Germany split closely between “reaction and progress.”³⁷

The *Volkszeitung* need not have worried overmuch, for the very need for minority papers to publish advice to desist from supporting German parties indicates that ordinary voters were not already doing just that. In such voting behavior only the Masurian *Cech*, a magazine aimed at that region's autochthonous population without espousing Polish nationalism, occasionally supported them. It alone issued an enthusiastic endorsement of Hindenburg before the presidential election's first round. “Dear friends!,” the journal wrote, “I too speak Polish.’ Do you know who spoke these words? None other than our

³³ “*Nein* - lasst die Preussen das unter sich allein abmachen...”; “Warum Du immer dänisch wählen sollst also auch jetzt am 24. April. 1932,” *Der Schleswiger*, April 14, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

³⁴ “demonstrative Stimmabgabe”; “Warum dänisch? Zwecklose Demonstration oder realpolitische Anteilnahme - Debatte in dänischen Kreisen,” *Volkszeitung*, April 15, 1932. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 4030, Nr. 106.

³⁵ “sich selbst zu Ausländern zu machen,” “die demokratische Staatsform durch die republikanischen Parteien gesichert ist”; Ibid.

³⁶ “Für die dänische Minderheit ist das Bestehen eines republikanischen Deutschland ein Lebensbedingung.”; Ibid.

³⁷ “Reaktion und Fortschritt”; Ibid.

president Hindenburg, when the Poles, who have lived there for years, greeted him among other people in Cologne.”³⁸ Hindenburg, who had rescued Masuria from the Russians and preserved Germany from Communism, now wanted to save the country from Nazism, the piece approvingly proclaimed. It finally concluded, “Our Masurian people should follow the lead of this brave and famous person and all the more because this savior of East Prussia belongs to those people who can speak Polish. We Masurians therefore vote for our Hindenburg.”³⁹ In its January/February 1933 issue, meanwhile, the magazine admonished Masurians that they had hopefully seen the error of their Nazi ways now that harsher minority politics were beginning to be made by the new government without any native Masurians being included in the policy deliberations.⁴⁰ For the upcoming March 1933 election, the journal then commended the German State Party to its readership as the embodiment of Prussian “objectivity and tolerance.”⁴¹ Even the *Cech*, however, counseled voting for the Masurian party when one was created for the 1932 Diet election, if only because the more ballots the group received, the more money would be pumped into Masurian schools, municipalities, and job creation schemes on account of the “Polish danger.”⁴² By and large, though, denouncing of the republic prevailed in newspapers aimed at minority members.

Whereas minority activists equated other parties with Nazism, ethnic Germans across the new borders recognized Nazism's approach to borderland matters as differing from that of Germany's political establishment, a divergence to which their response varied. Some, particularly in Czechoslovakia, considered the NSDAP a welcome,

³⁸ “Liebe Freunde! ‘Auch ich kann polnisch.’ Weiß ihr, wer diese Worte ausgesprochen hat? Kein anderer als unser Präsident Hindenburg, und zwar als ihn in Köln unter anderem volk auch die Polen begrüßten, die seit Jahren dort wohnen.”; “Aufforderung des Berliner Masurenbundes zur Wahl Hindenburgs,” *Cech*, January/February 1932, trans. in *Gesamtüberblick über die polnische Presse*. GStA PK, I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Nr. 172.

³⁹ “Unser masurisches Volk sollte den Spuren dieses tapferen und berühmten Menschen folgen, und das um so mehr, als dieser Befreier Ostpreußens zu den Leuten gehört, die polnisch sprechen können. Wir Masuren stimmen deshalb für unseren Hindenburg.”; *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ “Die Minderheitenfrage,” *Cech*, January/February 1933. SBB.

⁴¹ “Sachlichkeit und Toleranz”; “Welche Partei sollen wir wählen?,” *Cech*, January/February 1933. SBB.

⁴² “Polengefahr”; “Informationen der Zentralstelle des Masuren-Bundes,” *Cech*, March/April 1932. SBB.

militant, and close ally in the struggle for their irredentist goals. This mutual support notably manifested itself in the participation by ethnic Germans in Nazi events held in German border regions and by borderlands Nazis, in their turn, in rallies across the border. When, for instance, the NSDAP chapter in Annaberg planned a borderland rally to commemorate the lost territories for May 1930, it anticipated that “guests from Czechoslovakia” would take part.⁴³ On the occasion of Hitler’s speech in Flensburg that year, visiting Germans from North Schleswig were explicitly greeted by the speaker who introduced the party leader.⁴⁴ For the 1932 Hitler rally in Tilsit too, Germans from the Memel region had come from over the border, the *Preußische Zeitung* reported.⁴⁵ While it is unverifiable whether ethnic Germans really were present at Nazi rallies in German borderland towns, documents do conclusively show that Upper Silesian Nazis frequently attended Nazi events in the adjacent parts of the Sudetenland. In 1930, for instance, thirty German Nazis, including Silesian leadership figures Brückner and Hüttmann, participated in the Czechoslovak NSDAP’s party congress in Fryvaldov, where the welcoming of the distinguished guests formed a central element of the gathering’s opening. The congress’ chairperson hailed Brückner as “Hitler’s stadtholder in Upper Silesia” and rejoiced, “Your presence is a guarantee for us that our brother movement, which has become so strong, intends to be a loyal patron of Germandom outside the *Reich* borders.”⁴⁶ Some months after the congress, a Sudeten German Nazi delegate to, presumably, the Czechoslovak parliament apprised the readers of the *Preußische Zeitung* that the event had resulted in the Sudeten German Nazi party carrying out a wave of propaganda for regional autonomy so strong that the Czechoslovak government had been unable, despite

⁴³ “Gäste aus der Tschechoslowakei”; “Betrifft: Versammlung der Ortsgruppe Annaberg der NSDAP. am 12.3.1930 im Lokal bei Hartmann,” March 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1800.

⁴⁴ “Adolf Hitler in Flensburg,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, April 15, 1930. SHLB.

⁴⁵ “Der Führer an der litauischen Grenze,” *Preußische Zeitung*, July 16/17, 1932. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 93b.

⁴⁶ “Statthalter Hitler’s in Oberschlesien,” “Ihr Erscheinen ist uns eine Gewähr dafür, dass unsere so stark gewordene Bruderbewegung eine treue Schirmherrin des Volkstums ausserhalb der Reichsgrenze sein will.”; Report, November 18, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

its best efforts, to put a stop to it. The ideal of autonomous regions for Czechoslovakia's various national minorities had circulated since that country's inception, but only Nazism's arrival on the political scene, the deputy wrote, had shaken Sudeten Germans out of political torpor, typified by invariable discussions about whether to take active part in Czechoslovak politics in order to obtain rights and privileges for the minority or to disengage from politics rather than acknowledge Czechoslovakia as a legitimate political entity at all, and revived their agitation for it.⁴⁷ In the same year as that apparently pivotal party convention, Sudeten and *Reich* German fraternities with Nazi affinities also got together in Fryvaldov in order to found an association that encouraged the groups "to support each other in mutual contact" and "to visit National Socialist rallies on both sides [of the border]."⁴⁸ One Sudeten German speaker present at this meeting, a government report about it noted, had already addressed a Nazi election rally in Upper Silesian Ziegenhals.⁴⁹ In 1931, meanwhile, ninety-five *Reich* Germans travelled from the Upper Silesian small towns of Neustadt, Steubendorf, Wiendorf, and Leobschütz to the NSDAP district festival in Osoblaha. An official report observed about the festivities that, "The population of this border region [the Sudetenland] sees in belonging to the NSDAP not the party as such but rather an open profession of Germandom."⁵⁰

Beyond visits to the Sudetenland's Nazi gatherings, the Upper Silesian NSDAP also organized a clandestine courier service to facilitate communication with the Sudeten German Nazi party. In October 1932, for example, a letter asked Upper Silesian Nazi leadership figure Count York von Wartenburg about a potential get-together with Nazi activist Wiesner from Český Těšín. A first attempt to arrange this meeting had recently

⁴⁷ "Ein Kampffahr für das Sudetendeutschum," *Preußische Zeitung*, January 7, 1931. GStA PK, XX. HA, Rep. 240 D, 93b.

⁴⁸ "sich in gegenseitiger Fühlungnahme [zu] unterstützen," "nationalsozialistische Versammlungen auf beiden Seiten zu besuchen"; "Betrifft: Zusammenwirken von Anhängern der NSDAP. in Deutschland und der Tschechoslowakei," September 9, 1930. APO, RO, 1802.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Die Bevölkerung dieses Grenzgebiets sieht in der Zugehörigkeit zur NSDAP. nicht die Partei als solche, sondern ein offenes Bekenntnis zum Deutschtum.," "Betrifft: Bezirksfest der NSDAP. in Hotzenplotz - Tschechoslowakei," July 21, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

failed, since the service relied on relaying messages orally and this one had been passed on incorrectly. Wartenburg was therefore requested to propose another date at least two weeks in the future, to allow for the time it could take to transmit information by courier.⁵¹ The network came to the government's attention in 1931, when a report fretted that through it Helmuth Brückner was "in close contact with the National Socialist party in the CSR."⁵² A follow-up report a month later revealed that messages were largely relayed via the Fryvaldov law firm of Sudeten German party secretary Heindl, a popular Nazi leader in the region who was planning to stand as a Nazi candidate at the next election. A former Austrian officer's hotel reportedly also served as a hub for messengers. Weapons, which the Nazis and the *Stahlhelm* had bought from old *Reichswehr* stocks, were meanwhile smuggled into Czechoslovakia from the inn of the Upper Silesian border village Gostitz.⁵³ A conversation between the police president and a trusted Czech informant confirmed that the Czechoslovak like the German security services were paying particular attention to the courier link. Between them, the agencies had uncovered the two routes that the messenger service utilized: one led from Annaberg to Oderberg and the other from Leobschütz to Münzerei, a popular excursion spot without border controls. The messengers' names, however, had not been discovered.⁵⁴

Cross-border relations were not all harmonious, however. For one, the same instability and infighting that plagued the splintered *völkisch*-nationalist scene across Germany in the Weimar years affected these links, as the case of Eastern Upper Silesian Nazi district leader Sosna illustrates. In March 1933, a certain Ludwig Nowak wrote to the NSDAP chapter in Upper Silesian Hindenburg, asking to join it, because the party chairman in his Eastern Upper Silesian village of Nowawies was so incompetent and

⁵¹ Letter to Graf York von Wartenburg, October 5, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁵² "in enger Verbindung mit der nationasozialist. Partei in der CSR. steht"; "Betrifft: Verschiedene Nachrichten über Deutschland - Prüfung," February 18, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

⁵³ "Betr.: Dtsch. nationasozialist. Partei in der CSR. - Fühlung mit den reichsdtsh. Nationalsozialisten," February 23, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

⁵⁴ "Betrifft: Zusammenarbeit zwischen NSDAP. in Deutschland und in der Tschechoslowakei," June 27, 1931. APO, RO, 1803.

corrupt that he hampered what should be the easy expansion of the party. Nowak demanded that the chairman be reprimanded upon his next visit to Hindenburg and that Sosna appoint a replacement for him.⁵⁵ But by this time, Sosna did not himself enjoy much trust. In November of the previous year, he had been tasked by Count York von Wartenburg with smuggling a large amount of Nazi writings back with him across the border into Eastern Upper Silesia when he next visited the German part of the region.⁵⁶ The writings had indeed been picked up, but the very letter that confirmed this also mentioned that the head of a Katowice veterans' association had warned that Sosna was badly off financially and motivated in his NSDAP activism mainly by "material hopes."⁵⁷ A March 1933 letter finally counseled Count York von Wartenburg to treat Sosna, who had proven his lack of reliability by not in fact smuggling the pamphlets into Poland, with caution.⁵⁸ Although an April letter to an associate of Count York von Wartenburg's dismissed the accusations against Sosna as sabotage not just of him but of the party, which one could not allow to "fall asleep again" on account of such irresponsible wrecking, it is doubtful that Sosna enjoyed the party career for which he had apparently hoped.⁵⁹

More unique than careerism, incompetence, and corruption to Nazism's relations with ethnic Germans specifically was the mistrust with which many of them regarded Nazism due to its forays into minority politics, conducted despite its lack of comprehension of or sensitivity toward the context of the lives of members of German minorities. Ludwig Nowak's letter, for example, complained not only about the party chairman of Nowawies but also about all those comrades who had been in the Nazi party for fourteen years, yet had "left the border without reasons" or had "no idea what is going

⁵⁵ Letter, March 16, 1933. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁵⁶ Letter, November 21, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁵⁷ "materiellen Hoffnungen"; Letter, December 27, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁵⁸ Letter, March 10, 1933. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁵⁹ "wieder einschlafen soll"; Letter, April 6, 1933. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

on."⁶⁰ These men were failing, he implied, to live by their party's radical nationalist credo, which preached solidarity with the borderlands and lost territories. Equally deprecatory were the reactions to letters Nazi activist Gutenberg from Beuthen, describing himself as “the Upper Silesian leader of the greatest German youth movement,” sent out to young men who occupied leadership positions in German youth groups in Poland.⁶¹ Gutenberg asked them to write back before he entrusted them with further details about, presumably, the Hitler Youth, but apparently only one recipient did so. The single follow-up letter Gutenberg hence composed characterized Nazism as an unstoppable anti-liberal movement, which aimed to teach all Germans, including those beyond Germany’s borders, and particularly youths “*völkisch* thinking” and anti-Semitism.⁶² The other recipients were spared this presumptuous depiction of Nazism, since they did not answer Gutenberg to begin with. One youth leader from Łódź observed in a letter to a friend, who had apparently like him received Gutenberg’s initial letter, that Gutenberg had been injudicious to get in touch when “ideational cooperation” with *Reich* German groups was punishable by law in Poland.⁶³ Only if Gutenberg should “express himself more clearly” and let them know what precisely he was after, the letter-writer commented, would he consider replying.⁶⁴ Another friend of his, he told, had merely confirmed his address – perhaps this was Gutenberg's aforementioned sole respondent. Ethnic German frustration with Nazis' ignorance of their circumstances was not unjustified. Even an associate of Count York von Wartenburg's acknowledged in a December 1932 letter to the dignitary that their party had paid Eastern Upper Silesia's Germans little heed until that year.⁶⁵ When it did begin to engage with

⁶⁰ “Grenze ohne Gründe verlassen,” “die keine Ahnung haben was vorgeht”; Letter, March 16, 1933. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁶¹ “oberschlesischer Führer der grössten deutschen Jugendbewegung”; Attachment to letter, September 10, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁶² “*völkischen* Denken”; Letter, March 8, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁶³ “ideeler Zusammenarbeit”; Letter, March 29, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

⁶⁴ “sich genauer ausdrücken”; Ibid.

⁶⁵ Letter, December 27, 1932. APKa, Oddział w Gliwicach, 147/228.

these ethnic Germans, it appears, it was hamstrung by its unfamiliarity with their situation.

Ethnic Germans' wariness of Nazism was more pronounced yet in North Schleswig, where the minority's leadership openly opposed Nazism. The minority's leader Pastor Schmidt-Wodder complained in a January 1932 letter to a Schleswig-Holstein Nazi that the movement worked only with "emotions" and "forceful noises." It failed, however, when one wanted "something that is more than noise."⁶⁶ Schmidt-Wodder urged the letter's recipient to use his influence to persuade the party to participate in the united, steady borderland work that was actually necessary to sustain North Schleswig's Germanism until such a time as a border revision was practicable. His antipathy toward the NSDAP came to the fore more publicly nine months later, when he stood by the directorate of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund* during the controversy over the Nazis' split from it.⁶⁷ The minority's *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* correspondingly lamented *Gauleiter* Lohse's decree that all Nazi party members leave the *Bund*, as this schism meant "for now not the strengthening of borderland work but the splintering of forces and thereby the weakening of the fulfilment of the tasks of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner Bund*, which the Nat.-Soc. party also acknowledges as necessary."⁶⁸ The Nazis with their "unobjective" dissent, the paper speculated, had "wanted the break" all along.⁶⁹ Their ad hominem attacks on chairman Iversen had compelled him to stay on to preserve his "honor," when otherwise he may have stepped down voluntarily, the journal claimed, and other delegates, who agreed with the substance but not the tone of Nazi critiques, to stay silent.⁷⁰ The Nazis had also declined the invitation to join the steering

⁶⁶ Letter from Pastor Schmidt-Wodder to Zachi, January 12, 1932. LSH, Abt. 399.71 Nr. 122.

⁶⁷ Broder Schwensen, *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund 1919-1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993), 371-372.

⁶⁸ "zunächst nicht Stärkung der Grenzlandarbeit, sondern Zersplitterung der Kräfte und damit Schwächung der Erfüllung der Aufgaben des Schleswig-Holsteiner Bundes, die auch die nat.-soz. Partei als notwendig anerkennt"; "Die Nationalsozialisten kehren dem Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund den Rücken," *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*, September 6, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417, Nr. 91.

⁶⁹ "unsachliche," "wollte den Bruch"; Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Ehre"; Ibid.

committee of the *Bund* and to thereby help shape the organization.⁷¹ This willful provocation of a parting of the ways could not but be considered irresponsible from the perspective of the minority, the paper pronounced, since it would have to contest municipal and parliamentary elections soon and would only be able to do so successfully if it could rely on the support of a united nationalist front in Schleswig-Holstein. The minority could therefore only support any designs there might yet be for Schleswig-Holstein's "national circles" to reunite, the article concluded.⁷² The statement on the matter issued by the *Schleswigsche Wählerverein*, North Schleswig's central ethnic German political organization, similarly acknowledged that it hoped that Nazism's surge would bring "a vigorous strengthening of the *Heimat* front" and that minority individuals were certainly free to sympathize with specific political parties.⁷³ The minority as a whole, however, could have no use for disunity, for which reason the *Wählerverein* regretted the schism and hoped for its resolution. The *Schleswig-Holsteiner*, the members' magazine of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner Bund*, reprinted the communiqué of the *Wählerverein*, eager to showcase that ethnic Germans, the championing of whom was one of the major tasks of the *Bund*, disapproved of the Nazis' severance of ties with the association.

Already before the Nazis' falling out with the *Bund*, the *Schleswig-Holsteiner* had deplored that the heating up of party-political competition was making it difficult for ethnic Germans to maintain the necessary cohesion. They took a keen interest in "the wrestling of the forces in the *Reich*," knowing that their future too depended on the direction German politics took, but it was precisely this "knowledge of community of destiny," the magazine explained, that also had long convinced them of the imperativeness of standing together across party lines, like they had during the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "nationalen Kreisen"; Ibid.

⁷³ "eine kräftige Stärkung der Heimatfront"; "Grenzkampf verlangt Volksgemeinschaft," *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner*, September 1932. LSH.

plebiscite.⁷⁴ With political tensions in Germany running high, Schleswig-Holstein as a bastion of Nazism playing a significant part in them, and the Danish press reporting constantly on German Nazism and on "the consequences of this movement on the German-Danish border questions suspected by it," however, ethnic Germans were being drawn into "these things" and the self-restraint underpinning their unity was wearing thin.⁷⁵ The piece in the *Schleswig-Holsteiner* went on to share allegations made by the nationalist Danish newspaper *Hejmdal* that the DNSAP, the Danish Nazi party, had recently recorded growth driven in part by the joining of ethnic Germans, among them the vice president of the *Wählerverein*. The vice president had in fact quickly clarified in the *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* that he had rescinded his application for membership in the DNSAP as soon as he found out that it was a Danish nationalist party. The newspaper had furthermore printed a warning against getting involved in the DNSAP that had been issued jointly by the region's minority organizations, but the *Schleswig-Holsteiner* nevertheless used *Hejmdal* claims to underline its, otherwise valid, warning about Nazism's threat to the precarious political unity among ethnic Germans and by implication among nationalists at home.⁷⁶

Nazi activists naturally tried to repudiate this portrayal of them as party-political sowers of discord who put the minority at risk. Prominent Nazi speaker pastor Peperkorn, for instance, responded to condemnations of the party's split from the *Bund* with a piece in the Nazi *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* intended to "[p]olitely, but clearly" – at least according to the piece's title – refute them.⁷⁷ The *Wählerverein* had charged that "the border matter" was being turned into a "party matter" when ethnic Germans wished to fight for North Schleswig's Germandom "in self-responsibility and solidary

⁷⁴ "des Ringes der Kräfte im Reich," "aus solchem Wissen um Schicksalsgemeinschaft"; "Deutsch-Nordschleswig und der dänische Nationalsozialismus," *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner*, July 1932. LSH.

⁷⁵ "der von ihr vermuteten Auswirkung dieser Bewegung auf die deutsch-dänische Grenzfrage," "diese Dinge"; *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ "Höflich, aber deutlich," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, September 17, 1932. LSH, Abt. 417, Nr. 91.

unity," a position that, Peperkorn averred, the Nazi party in actuality supported.⁷⁸ It was out of respect for the minority's autonomy, he added, that the Nazis had not spoken out even when they disagreed, as they often did, with its standpoints. Nazis had not thus far, for example, publicly challenged the minority's choice to focus its politics largely on economic questions, even though they believed that bread-and-butter issues could only be resolved within the context of fighting for an overarching ideology. They had moreover not criticized Schmidt-Wodder, despite his "strange" views about Nazism.⁷⁹ The *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* had, in contrast, like Schmidt-Wodder, misrepresented Hitler and thereby Nazism, even though it was well known that North Schleswig's Germans longed for "every word from the mouth of Adolf Hitler."⁸⁰ Information was being withheld though ethnic Germans sought it. Simultaneously, the *Wählerverein*, whose reproof of the Nazi party's split from the *Bund* the *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung* had publicized, hypocritically hoped to profit from the upsurge in nationalist activism that Nazism's rapid rise brought on. It was hence the journalism of the *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*, which "perhaps generates the favor of a certain master class, but which insults the feeling of the people," that was stoking tensions, Peperkorn contended, not he with this article or his fellow Nazis through their repudiation of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*.⁸¹ Nazis could no longer tolerate "the treatment of National Socialist thoughts and deeds and the shameless journalistic disparaging of Adolf Hitler you practice," Peperkorn in conclusion threatened the *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*.⁸² He therefore urged the journal's editor to give up his post in favor of a "younger man" with a better understanding of the fight for Germandom.⁸³

⁷⁸ "'Grenzsache', "'Parteisache', "'in eigener Verantwortung und solidarischer Geschlossenheit"; Ibid.

⁷⁹ "sonderbare"; Ibid.

⁸⁰ "jedem Wort aus dem Munde Adolf Hitlers"; Ibid.

⁸¹ "vielleicht das Wohlwollen einer gewissen Herrenschicht erzeugen, aber das Empfinden des Volkes beleidigt"; Ibid.

⁸² "die von Ihnen geübte Behandlung nationalsozialistischer Gedanken und Taten und die schamlose journalistische Herabsetzung Adolf Hitlers"; Ibid.

⁸³ "jüngeren Mann"; Ibid.

Contrary to Peperkorn's assertions that the Nazi party had until then refrained from criticism of the minority, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung* had in fact already in February 1931 taken to task Schmidt-Wodder, despite “all respect we bring his personality,” for publishing an unsympathetic article about Nazism.⁸⁴ Nazis did agree with Schmidt-Wodder, the piece began, that the issues of will and social policy were coming to a head. In fact, it was their movement that promoted a “new [national] will” and that, in spite of being right-wing, made more radical social policy demands than did the Social Democrats.⁸⁵ Schmidt-Wodder, however, had charged that the Nazis' social policy propositions were unrealistic and professed his faith in the persistence of the Social Democratic and Center parties. The Nazi reply, however, insisted that it would soon force a decision between those parties and itself. Schmidt-Wodder had furthermore accused the Nazi party of prematurely committing to a policy of friendship with Italy and Britain. All it was in reality doing, the *Tageszeitung* averred, was building tentative alliances with countries that, like Germany but unlike France, had grown disenchanted with the Treaty of Versailles. Finally, Schmidt-Wodder had taken exception to “the spread of National Socialism in North Schleswig.”⁸⁶ The *Tageszeitung* retorted that Nazism was a German movement that proliferated organically and conquered “the hearts of Germans” without asking “whether it is convenient.”⁸⁷ Schleswig-Holstein's Nazis thus did in their turn chastise North Schleswig's minority leadership for the mistrust it showed their movement, but until Hitler's appointment as chancellor it remained cool towards his party. With the exception of visits by the Nazi student group at the university of Kiel to the minority's annual Knivsberg festival, ties between borderland Nazis and

⁸⁴ “aller Achtung, die wir seiner Persönlichkeit entgegenbringen,” “Etwas vom Nationalsozialismus”; “Schmidt-Wodder über den Nationalsozialismus,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*, February 5, 1931. SHLB.

⁸⁵ “neuen [nationalen] Willen”; Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Verbreitung des Nationalsozialismus in Nordschleswig”; Ibid.

⁸⁷ “ob er dem Einzelnen genehm ist,” “die Herzen der Deutschen”; Ibid.

ethnic Germans do not appear to have developed.⁸⁸ After the Nazi take-over of power, however, the minority and its organizations were Nazified swiftly, with Schmidt-Wodder pushed out, revealing a reservoir of Nazi sympathies in the ethnic German community.

Nazism's brand of militant irredentism was, all in all, received in differing ways. Some ethnic Germans viewed Nazism askance due to its divisiveness and ignorance of their circumstances, while others welcomed the movement's forcefulness and vigor. The latter group maintained strong ties with their Nazi comrades in the German borderlands. Non-German nationalist activists, meanwhile, instrumentalized Nazism's aggressive behavior toward minorities to explain away their movements' decline. The Nazi movement's anti-minority misdeeds were opportunistically portrayed as emblematic of German parties and German society more widely, such that, the argument ran, minority activism could not but wane. Disengagement from German politics was therefore counseled, even as Nazism's successes threatened the minorities and the republic both.

⁸⁸ "Knivsbergfahrt," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*, June 15, 1931. SHLB; "Achtung! Knivsbergfahrt!," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*, June 16, 1932. SHLB.

Conclusion: The Third Reich and Its Aftermath in the Borderlands

Contrary to justifiable anxieties about the danger Nazism's rise posed to minorities, the Third Reich in its early days pursued a policy of conciliation with Poland in particular. In January 1934, it ratified a non-aggression pact with Poland. In 1937, a bilateral minorities treaty was additionally concluded.¹ The non-aggression pact especially improved Poles' condition. Thus, the Polish vice consul in Lyck reported in 1935 that the town's sole book rental, which was Nazi-owned, had created an exhibit titled "Our Neighbor" in its display window consisting of Polish novels, magazines with Piłsudski on the cover, and posters depicting the Polish White Eagle and Polish folk scenes.² Meanwhile, the *Bund Deutscher Osten*, the Nazi umbrella organization for Eastern matters, was involved in arranging city partnerships between Germany and Poland.³ In Schleswig, the so-called *Ostersturm* campaign of 1933, during which local Nazi activists sought to pressure Copenhagen into renegotiating the German-Danish border through a mixture of fiery rhetoric and the rapid Nazification of North Schleswig, was suppressed by the Nazi government in Berlin. Hitler and other government figures were quick to appease the ruffled Denmark.⁴

This deceptive quiet in the borderlands did not last long, however. In Schleswig, the appointment of Wilhelm Sievers, the mayor of Eckernförde and leader of the Nazi take-over of the *Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund*, to the position of Flensburg's *Landrat* suggested that there would eventually be "further National Socialist activities in the

¹ Rudolf Jaworski, "Die polnische Grenzminorität in Deutschland 1920-1939," in *Deutsche und Polen zwischen den Kriegen: Minderheitenstatus und "Volkstumskampf" im Grenzgebiet. Amtliche Berichtersattung aus beiden Ländern 1920-1939*, eds. Rudolf Jaworski and Marian Wojciechowski (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1997), 55.

² Stanisław Achremczyk, *Elk: Dzieje miasta* (Olsztyn: Edytor Wers, 2012), 298.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Peter Hopp, "Bemerkungen zum 'Ostersturm' 1933," in "*Wir bauen das Reich*": *Aufstieg und erste Herrschaftsjahre des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein*, eds. Erich Hoffmann and Peter Wulf (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1983), 204-207.

border area."⁵ In the East, meanwhile, Germanization was reintroduced as re-Germanization and from 1938 the members of Polish organizations were harassed, with some leadership figures being incarcerated in concentration camps.⁶ This persecution was framed as retribution for similar ill treatment of Germans in Poland, much like the outbreak of war was in due course justified as a response to a – staged – Polish raid on Gleiwitz's radio tower.⁷ Subsequent massacres of ethnic Germans in Poland during the first days of hostilities, like Bydgoszcz's notorious Bloody Sunday, were used to further underline the supposedly just cause of the war.⁸ Soon, the lost territories, with the exception of North Schleswig, were reincorporated into the *Reich*, while the remainder of Poland and indeed much of Eastern Europe was occupied. This recouping of German territory, paired with the subduing of the Polish minority and the elimination of the Polish state appeared, for a time, to resolve borderlands residents' concerns. The war, Edmund Spevack noted in an article about the Border Province, enjoyed concomitant support among them.⁹

Nazi leaders from the border regions examined in this dissertation certainly were profoundly implicated in the Third Reich's crimes. Wilhelm Sievers, after his service as *Landrat* and then simultaneously mayor of Flensburg, was transferred to Brandenburg an der Havel in 1938, where he was a hardline "National Socialist until the final hour."¹⁰ In late April 1945, he insisted on defending Brandenburg, which was in a hopeless position, against the advancing Red Army. He refused to evacuate the civilian population or to open food depots to it that the army had made available.¹¹ Sievers' superior Lohse,

⁵ "die weitere nationalsozialistische Aktivitäten im Grenzraum vermuten ließ"; Ibid., 206.

⁶ Jaworski, "Die polnische Grenzminorität in Deutschland 1920-1939," 68-69.

⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁸ Edmund Spevack, "Borderland Nationalism, Westward Migration, and Anti-Polish Aggression: The Case of the Grenzmark Posen-Westpreussen, 1919-1939," *East European Quarterly* 30 (1996): 324.

⁹ Ibid., 322-323.

¹⁰ "Nationalsozialisten bis zur letzten Stunde"; "Sievers," Stadtmuseum Brandenburg, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://reformation.stadtmuseum-brandenburg.de/reformation/historischer-kontext-test/92-historischer-kontext-unterseiten/215-sievers.html>.

¹¹ Ibid.

meanwhile, acted as *Regierungspräsident* of Schleswig-Holstein throughout the entire twelve years of Nazi rule and in addition headed the civilian administration of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*. Based in Riga for this post, he participated in the dispossession of local Jews and in the organization of their as well as deported Jews' murder.¹² One of Lohse's subordinates was Wilhelm Kube, erstwhile *Gauleiter* for the Border Province and now commissar for the district of White Ruthenia. He acquiesced to the liquidation of Russian and Polish Jews but protested that of German Jews deported to Belorussia.¹³ East Prussia's *Gauleiter* Erich Koch, for his part, was put in charge of the *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* as well as of Polish areas adjoining his *Gau*. There, he instituted a reign of terror so brutal that it was criticized even among the Nazi leadership.¹⁴

The war and the years immediately afterwards saw large-scale population movements, which aligned political and ethnic boundaries in Central and Eastern Europe more closely than they had ever been before. Ethnic Germans from far-flung corners of Eastern Europe were resettled in Germany, often under poor conditions, during the conflict. Afterwards, Germans fled or were expelled from the areas East of the Oder river, including Pomerania, Silesia, and what had been the Border Province. Masurians, whose attempted flight had been overtaken by the Red Army but who resisted the subsequent Polonization drives, left for Germany virtually in a body once de-Stalinization permitted it in the late 1950s.¹⁵ Germany's claims to the home regions of these displaced persons were not abandoned soon. Much like the Weimar Republic never formally recognized its Eastern border, so West Germany only ratified the Oder-Neiße border in

¹² "Hinrich Lohse (1896 – 1964)," Gedenkorte Europa 1939-1945, accessed September 17, 2020, https://www.gedenkorte-europa.eu/de_de/article-hinrich-lohse-1896-ndash-1964.html.

¹³ "Kube, Wilhelm," Deutsche Biographie, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz46481.html>.

¹⁴ "Erich Koch," Portal Rheinische Geschichte, accessed September 17, 2020, <http://www.rheinische-geschichte.lvr.de/Persoenlichkeiten/erich-koch/DE-2086/lido/57c93684e751d2.41638850>.

¹⁵ Andreas Kossert, *Preussen, Deutsche oder Polen?: die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 311-318; Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?*, 297-310.

1970 under chancellor Willy Brandt. In the preceding decades in particular, the so-called *Vertriebene* and the associations they formed constituted an influential force in German politics, especially within the Christian Democratic party. When the country was reunited in 1990, some observers worried that a newly powerful Germany would resuscitate irredentist claims to former Eastern provinces.¹⁶ Such demands did not arise, however, and East-Central Europe remains the domain of fairly ethnically homogeneous nation states. Some minorities endure, with Upper Silesians, who resisted Germanization during the war and Polonization after it, Poland's largest at about two percent of the population as of the 2011 census.¹⁷ In Schleswig, where no border changes have occurred since 1920, minorities also remain on both sides of the border, though they live in harmony with the majority populations now.¹⁸

Such amity did not reign during the interwar period. Recent territorial losses had starkly illustrated to Germans what the failure of the nationalist ideal of the nation and the state as coextensive to obtain implied. The continued visible presence of ethnic minorities in the remaining border regions kept these anxieties running high. These realities and concerns Nazism had to interact with as it flourished in Germany's border regions, for there later Nazi activists – and audiences – had been influenced formatively by their personal experience of the nationality conflict. Moreover, the heritage of the post-war paramilitary and plebiscitary defense of the borders shaped political culture, so that the Nazi movement sought to link itself and its struggles with these earlier ones. Borderlands consciousness, with its radical nationalist potentialities, was fostered and capitalized on. Despite these appeals to a nationalism usually conceived of as race-based, Nazis did preserve a measure of flexibility regarding the basis of national belonging, for,

¹⁶ Spevack, “Borderland Nationalism, Westward Migration, and Anti-Polish Aggression,” 326.

¹⁷ Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Raport z wyników: Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*. Warsaw: Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych 2012.

https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/lud_raport_z_wynikow_NSP2011.pdf, accessed September 17, 2020.

¹⁸ Peter Thaler, *Of Mind and Matter: The Duality of National Identity in the German-Danish Borderlands* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), could not check page due to lack of access to CUL during corona crisis

they knew, in order to accomplish irredentist goals they would have to win over the nationally indifferent. On the other hand, however, Nazis regularly committed nationalist violence, exaggerated by the press and minimized by the government, that aimed to suppress the visibility of non-Germans in the borderlands. The Nazi movement shared this violent tactic as well as views about border issues with the wider far right, though the party did occasionally try to set itself apart from it by criticizing its handling of these matters. The government's management of borderland affairs the Nazis censured far more sharply and frequently yet. Finally, Nazis' behavior in the borderlands shaped how non-Germans and ethnic Germans positioned themselves vis-à-vis the movement. Its manner of engaging with the borderlands' situation was, to be sure, just one facet of its appeal there. Some, though, could undoubtedly say with August Marleiter that it was their borderland experiences that had drawn them to Nazism.¹⁹

¹⁹ August Marleiter, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/58289/august-span-classqueryhmarleiterspan?ctx=50ebb136-9f0a-45f5-9b30-f5f1dff00a79&idx=0>.

Appendix: The Press in the Borderlands

The coverage by the regional press of Nazi activism in the borderlands is one of the sources on which this study most heavily relies. Considering how fragmentary the record from many border regions is, those newspaper editions and press clippings that survive have been invaluable. However, a search through the archives for anything relating to Nazism necessarily directs the researcher's focus preferentially to documents that concern themselves with that movement. Governmental collections of press clippings are, in addition, by their nature made up of articles that were or might have become sources of controversy. This selective nature of both document collecting and document perusing creates a risk of overestimating Nazism's centrality to regional politics and discourse. The question thus arises to what extent the journalistic texts cited here and their depiction of Nazism are representative of the regional press landscapes and of their discussion of the ascendant movement.

Circulation numbers can serve as one indicator of papers' impact. No such numbers are available, however, for the few regional NSDAP organs cited in this study. Founded in the late 1920s at the earliest, the *ALA Zeitungskatalog* of 1925 does not yet encompass them, while they had ceased publication by the time *Sperlings Zeitschriften- und Zeitungsaddressbuch* came out in 1947. While a listing for the regional Nazi paper *Schlesischer Adler* is included in Bernhard Gröschel's *Die Presse Oberschlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1945*, it does not contain circulation statistics.¹ Circulation is easier to assess in the case of Nazi-leaning, independent newspapers. Of the papers published in the Border Province Posen-West Prussia in 1925, for instance, the *Grenzmark* had, at 6,000 copies, the joint second-highest circulation.² This circulation was equal to that of the Center Party's *Grenzwacht* and second-only to the nationalist

¹ Bernhard Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1945: Dokumentation und Strukturbeschreibung* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1993), 216.

² Ala-Anzeigen-Aktiengesellschaft, *Zeitungskatalog* (Berlin: ALA, 1925), 34.

Gesellige.³ By the early 1930s, the still nominally unaffiliated paper was run by NSDAP members.⁴ Masuria's biggest newspaper, meanwhile, was the *Lycker Zeitung*, which in the 1925 ALA catalogue is categorized as associated with the DNVP.⁵ At a circulation of 6,500, it was also the third-largest DNVP paper in all of East Prussia, with the larger two both published in the capital of Königsberg.⁶ This was also where the NSDAP organ, the *Preußische Zeitung*, which did not yet exist at the time of the ALA catalogue's appearance, was later produced. While the province's single largest paper for which the ALA register gives a circulation figure was the *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, affiliated with the center-right DVP, and the SPD maintained the *Königsberger Volkszeitung*, though no circulation figures are provided for that, overall the East Prussian press landscape had a definite right-wing bent.⁷ When in the early 1930s the *Lycker Zeitung* became notable for its outspoken support for Nazism, it therefore had limited differently minded competition. All the other, smaller newspapers published in the region were also nationalist or, at best, purely advertisement sheets. The situation was comparable in Pomerania's easternmost counties. There, the *Lauenburger Zeitung* was by far the most important newspaper, with a circulation of 10,800 copies.⁸ In 1925, it, like the *Lycker Zeitung*, was affiliated with the DNVP and, as in Masuria, its locally published competitors were either also nationalist or, according to the ALA catalogue, unpolitical. In far eastern Pomerania, as in Masuria and the Border Province, newspapers sympathetic to Nazism, it is thus fair to conclude, constituted a highly influential part of the journalistic ecosystem.

In Upper Silesia, though, the press landscape looked different. In 1925, the largest newspapers in that province were the nationalist *Oberschlesische Morgenzeitung* at a

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Z notesu Ericha Hoffmanna: Kronika Złotowa i okolic część III (lata 1921-1952)*, ed. Joachim Zdrenka (Złotow: Muzeum Ziemi Złotowskiej w Złotowie, 2011), 107.

⁵ Ala-Anzeigen-Aktiengesellschaft, *Zeitungskatalog*, 44.

⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 45.

circulation of 35,000 copies,⁹ the independent *Oberschlesischer Wanderer* at 32,000,¹⁰ the Center Party's *Oberschlesische Volksstimme* at 30,000,¹¹ and the conservative *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost* at 29,800.¹² The second rung of Upper Silesian newspapers exhibited similar ideological diversity. The Center Party's *Oppelner Nachrichten*¹³ and its *Oppelner Kurier* in the early 1930s both had circulations of around 10,000 copies.¹⁴ The *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost* still had a print run of 30,000 then, but declined precipitously to one of 15,210 by 1933.¹⁵ The radical German National *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung*, published by Dr. Knaak, Upper Silesia's version of Alfred Hugenberg, however, had grown from a circulation of 6,000 in 1925 to one of 10,800 in 1932, establishing itself firmly in that second tier of the region's newspapers.¹⁶ While the Nazi *Schlesischer Adler* seems to have been short-lived and the bulk of the province's press remained, like the Center Party with which so much of it was affiliated, hostile to Nazism, the segment of the Upper Silesian population that identified as nationalist Germans – between 25% and 35% throughout the Weimar period - thus had in the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* an increasingly high-profile mouthpiece.¹⁷

Schleswig-Holstein, meanwhile, was home to the oldest Nazi daily continuously published through 1945, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Tageszeitung*.¹⁸ Despite its longevity, though, the circulation of the *Tageszeitung* never exceeded that of a reasonably large county town newspaper, according to Markus Oddey's detailed study of the

⁹ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰ Ibid., 64.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens*, 49.

¹³ Ibid., 199.

¹⁴ Ibid., 214.

¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶ Ibid., 208.

¹⁷ „Reichstagswahlen: Provinz Oberschlesien“, *Wahlen in Deutschland*, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/wuupoberschlesien.htm>.

¹⁸ Rudolf Rietzler, *„Kampf in der Nordmark“: Das Aufkommen des Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1982), 432.

province's press and its relationship to Nazism.¹⁹ Throughout the Weimar period, it sold mainly in and around Itzehoe in Holstein, where it was published. In other parts of the province, the NSDAP was reliant on sympathetic coverage by existing newspapers. In Kiel, for example, the emphasis on agrarian propaganda in the *Tageszeitung* was ill-suited to urban realities,²⁰ while in Kiel's rural surrounds the *Tageszeitung* could only be received by post and hence with a delay.²¹ That the *Kieler Zeitung* adopted a favorable attitude toward the NSDAP was hence very advantageous for the party. In the immediate border region, similar relationships between party and press existed. The NSDAP gladly cooperated with the *Lecker Anzeiger*, for example, which was published in Südtondern county. There, as well as in the rural parts of neighboring Flensburg county, timely delivery of the agrarian-oriented *Tageszeitung* could not be guaranteed, but the local *Flensburger NS-Zeitung* also could not gain traction, focused as it was on urban concerns.²² Supportive coverage from the *Anzeiger* filled this void. A similar role fell to the *Schleswiger Nachrichten*. In Schleswig county too, the *Tageszeitung* was not readily available; in fact, it had only 434 subscribers there as of August 1930.²³ The NSDAP was, however, really interested in Schleswig and Flensburg counties. It had tried to negotiate a cooperation with a local printing press, so that the *Tageszeitung* could be printed locally, but this idea had fallen through.²⁴ Therefore, the party focused its efforts on the *Nachrichten*. *Gauleiter* Lohse and district leader Meyer-Quade paid a visit to the paper's editor, who was anti-republican but skeptical of Nazism, and tried to secure a more positive portrayal of their party by flattery. The editor, relishing being courted by politicians of regional importance, was receptive to this tactic and soon, especially after Meyer-Quade invited him to a rally with Hitler in Hamburg, became a genuine admirer of

¹⁹ Markus Oddey, *Unter Druck gesetzt: Presse und Nationalsozialismus in Schleswig-Holstein. Struktur, Wahrnehmung, Herrschaftsakzeptanz*. (Eutin: Lumpeter & Lasel, 2006), 215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

²² *Ibid.*, 95.

²³ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the party and of its leader. He even gave the local NSDAP *Ortsgruppenleiter* his own column in 1931.²⁵

When they cooperated with independent newspapers, the Nazis were not merely making a virtue of necessity, however. Party organs, NSDAP leaders recognized, reached far fewer readers than established newspapers and in any case preached only to the converted. It was therefore strategic to disseminate the Nazi message also through regular local papers. Some newspaper men did try to cement their cooperation with the NSDAP by joining it²⁶ or had relatives or seconds-in-command do so.²⁷ But Meyer-Quade, for one, also defended the editor of the *Schleswiger Nachrichten* against party hardliners' criticism that he had failed to join up: The editor's enthusiastic support of but simultaneous independence from the Nazi party, Meyer-Quade argued, made the paper's pro-Nazi message all the more credible to bourgeois readers.²⁸ The NSDAP's *Reich* press secretary echoed this sentiment in July 1932: A sympathetic news item read by 50,000 readers of the bourgeois press held more value for the party than a, in the Nazi view, more accurate or ideologically pure piece that reached only 5,000 readers of the party press.²⁹

Collaborating with the NSDAP held advantages for the newspapers too. In a highly competitive newspaper market, adopting a friendly stance toward Nazism could serve to set a journal apart from its competitors and to bind a sizable circle of readers to it. In many localities in Schleswig-Holstein, therefore, there was in the early 1930s one republican local paper and another that was Nazi-oriented.³⁰ The party was aware of the bargaining power that this profitability of Nazi-friendly reporting granted it. In July 1932, for example, the NSDAP press secretary for Neumünster pressured the editor-in-chief of

²⁵ Ibid., 105-106.

²⁶ Ibid., 132.

²⁷ Ibid., 86.

²⁸ Ibid., 110.

²⁹ Ibid., 108.

³⁰ Ibid., 203-204.

the *General-Anzeiger für Neumünster*: ““With today’s political constellation and in view of the result of the impending *Reichstag* election the acceptance of these articles should be connected with no economic risk for you.””³¹

Often, newspapers nevertheless tried to play things safe. Many papers, for instance, continued to uphold the republic and even to criticize the Nazis in the national and international sections, all the while reporting favorably about Nazi events in the local pages. The *Heider Anzeiger*, for its part, printed press releases by the state and national governments without marking them as such and at the same time in the local portion published more and more NSDAP press releases about its local events.³² The *Lübecker General-Anzeiger*, meanwhile, warned readers against the right-wing extremists’ propaganda that claimed that Hindenburg was a candidate of the left ahead of the 1932 presidential election, but simultaneously reported positively on the NSDAP in the local section.³³ That section’s editor, a man who had joined the Nazi party in 1932, was even promoted and given a permanent position as the second editor-in-chief.³⁴ The *Landeszeitung*, a right-wing paper affiliated with the regionalist *Landespartei*, similarly made a journalist, who had joined the NSDAP and become its district press secretary, the second editor for the local section.³⁵ A variant on this strategy of keeping the political orientations of the local and supraregional sections of a newspaper distinct was for the same publishing house to operate two newspapers of different political stripes in the same locality.³⁶ The *Kieler Zeitung*, for instance, was put out by the same company also responsible for its republican rival, the *Kieler Neueste Nachrichten*.³⁷

³¹ „Bei der heutigen politischen Konstellation und im Hinblick auf den Ausfall der bevorstehenden Reichstagswahl dürfte die Aufnahme der Artikel [...] mit keinerlei wirtschaftlichem Risiko für Sie verbunden sein.“; *Ibid.*, 149.

³² *Ibid.*, 113-114.

³³ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

These dynamics unfolded in the border area's papers too. The *Lecker Anzeiger* filled its local section, even outside election periods, with as many reports about events hosted by the NSDAP as about those organized by bourgeois parties and by civil society associations.³⁸ The *Flensburger General-Anzeiger* also concentrated favorable reporting about the NSDAP in the local section, promoting the party's events as ones of the small business milieu. This positive coverage, which it further intensified in the fall of 1932, helped the *General-Anzeiger* differentiate itself from the *Flensburger Nachrichten*, which remained hostile toward the NSDAP. Its friendliness toward the party even helped the *General-Anzeiger* weather the arrival on the journalistic scene that year of the *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*, one of whose staffers it furthermore poached. Whereas the *NS-Zeitung* with its circulation of about 6,000 never gained much traction, the *General-Anzeiger*, arguably thanks to having lastingly captured the Nazi market niche, actually recorded a slight increase in subscriptions during the fall of 1932, which was otherwise a troubled time for Nazism.³⁹

Printers and publishers, whether for business reasons or out of real Nazi conviction, rarely resisted the press' rapid self-Nazification. Commitment to the republic was skin-deep. In fact, Oddey found, only the province's Marxist journals – and to a lesser degree the few DDP-affiliated ones – combatted Nazism right through to 1933. Just one newspaper, the *Itzehoer Nachrichten*, remained steadfast in its critique of Nazism from a conservative, Hindenburg-loyal standpoint until that time.⁴⁰

Schleswig's press landscape is the best documented, but it appears to have been emblematic of that in most other border provinces. While party organs either did not exist at all there or did not enjoy a wide reach, right-wing, anti-republican newspapers sold well and were the norm. As the NSDAP began its steep ascent in the early 1930s, these pre-existing journals provided increasingly sympathetic coverage, trying to lock in a

³⁸ Ibid., 92-94.

³⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 171.

readership base that was abandoning older far-right parties in favor of the NSDAP. Opposing journalistic voices became rare everywhere but in Upper Silesia, where Center Party papers continued to dominate, even though the *Oberschlesische Tageszeitung* too was an increasingly powerful voice. Thus, though both archives and archival research are by nature selective, the themes and rhetoric highlighted in this dissertation are representative of political discourses that were hegemonic in many border provinces and that even in Upper Silesia played an important part in press culture.

Abbreviations

AAN	Archiwum Akt Nowych
Abt	Abteilung
APK	Archiwum Państwowe w Koszalinie
APKa	Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach
APO	Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu
APOI	Archiwum Państwowe w Olsztynie
APP	Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu
APS	Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie
BArch	Bundesarchiv
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
DVFP	Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei
GStA PK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz
HA	Hauptabteilung
KP	Książnica Pomorska
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KSI	Kreis- und Stadtarchiv Itzehoe
LSH	Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein
MOB	Martin-Opitz-Bibliothek
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NPO	Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Górnośląskiej w Opolu
NPP	Naczelne Prezydium w Pile
NPS	Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Pomorskiej w Szczecinie
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
PA AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts

RK	Rejencja Koszalińska
RO	Rejencja Opolska
RP	Rzeczypospolitej
RPi	Rejencja Pilska
SA	Sturmabteilung
SBB	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
SHLB	Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS	Schutzstaffel

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- Konsulat Generalny RP w Opolu

Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach, Oddział w Gliwicach (State Archive in Katowice, Gliwice branch)

- Narowdowo-Socjalistyczna Niemiecka Partia Robotnicza, Kierownictwo

Powiatowe w Zabrze (NSDAP Kreisleitung Hindenburg)

Archiwum Państwowe w Koszalinie (State Archive in Koszalin)

- Rejencja Koszalińska (Regierung Köslin)
- Starostwo Powiatowe w Złotowie (Landratsamt Flatow)

Archiwum Państwowe w Olsztynie (State Archive in Olsztyn)

- Wschodnio-Niemiecka Służba Ojczyźniana (Ostdeutscher Heimatdienst)

Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu (State Archive in Opole)

- Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Górnośląskiej w Opolu (Oberpräsidium der Provinz Oberschlesien Oppeln)

- Rejencja Opolska (Regierung Oppeln)

Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (State Archive in Poznan)

- Naczelne Prezydium w Pile (Oberpräsidium Schneidemühl)

Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu, Oddział w Pile (State Archive in Poznan, Piła branch)

- Rejencja Pilska (Regierung Schneidemühl)
- Zbiory czasopismo (Newspaper collection)

Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie (State Archive in Szczecin)

- Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Pomorskiej w Szczecinie (Oberpräsidium von Pommern in Stettin)

Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives)

- Hans Frank
- Hauptarchiv der NSDAP
- Reichsministerium des Inneren
- Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP

Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Privy State Archives)

- Gauarchiv Ostpreußen
- Justizministerium 1772-1945
- Landratsämter
- Ministerium des Innern (1727 -) 1807-1934 (- 1945)
- Regierung zu Allenstein

Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford, California, USA.

- Theodore Fred Abel papers
- Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (State Archive of Schleswig-Holstein)
 - Oberpräsidium und Provinzialrat der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein
 - Regierung zu Schleswig
 - Nachlässe
 - Schleswig-Holsteiner-Bund
- Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes
 - Politisches Archiv und Historischer Dienst

Periodicals

- Cambridge University Library
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- Kreis- und Stadtarchiv Itzehoe
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- Książnica Pomorska (Pomeranian Library)
 - *Pommersche Warte*
 - *Pommersche Zeitung*
- Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein (State Archive of Schleswig-Holstein)
 - *Der Schleswig-Holsteiner*
- Martin-Opitz-Bibliothek (Martin Opitz Library)
 - *Preußische Zeitung*
- Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek (Schleswig-Holstein State Library)
 - *Flensburger Nachrichten*
 - *Flensburger NS-Zeitung*
 - *Schleswig-Holsteinische Hochschulblätter*
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 - *Schleswigsche Nachrichten*
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 - *Cech*

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