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The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom Organizations: 1933-1939

Submitted By Thomas W. Osborne

**A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
McGill University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**



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The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom Organizations: 1933-1939

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M.A. Degree, August 1995**

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and assesses the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations from 1933 to 1939. The first chapter outlines the Peace Treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St. Germain and their effect upon the increased German minority in Europe. This body of Germans in countries outside Germany, Austria and Switzerland are referred to as the Volksdeutsche. The policies of the Weimar Government towards the German minorities in Europe are then examined. The second chapter outlines the minority policy of the National Socialist Party and various prominent National Socialist leaders. Chapter three outlines the major non-National Socialist and National Socialist Germandom organizations. Particular emphasis is given to the Verein für Deutschtum im Ausland or the VDA, the Volksdeutscher Rat or the VR, Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP or AO, the Büro Kursell and the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi. Chapters four through six deal with the events that lead to the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations. Although the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations maintained a degree of independence from Nazi influence from 1933 until 2 July 1938, there was never any doubt that eventually the National Socialist Germandom organizations would gain ascendancy over them. In late 1936, the National Socialist Germandom organizations began to achieve lasting power and influence. By 1938, the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations were virtually impotent. The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations, therefore, mirrors the Gleichschaltung that occurred on all levels of society in Germany following Adolf Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933.

Cette thèse consiste en un examen et une évaluation de la Gleichschaltung (coordination politique) des organismes d'origine allemande de 1933 à 1939. Le premier chapitre résume les traités de paix de Versailles, de Trianon et de St-Germain et leur effet sur la minorité allemande accrue en Europe. Ce groupe d'Allemands habitant les pays à l'extérieur de l'Allemagne, de l'Autriche et de la Suisse est désigné sous le nom de Volksdeutsche. Les politiques du gouvernement de Weimar à l'égard des minorités allemandes en Europe sont examinées. Le deuxième chapitre résume la politique en matière de minorités du Parti socialiste national et de plusieurs chefs importants du parti. Dans le chapitre trois se trouvent une liste et une description des organismes principaux allemands, c.-à-d. les organismes socialistes nationaux et non socialistes nationaux. On étudie notamment les organismes suivants: Verein für Deutschtum im Ausland (VDA),

Volksdeutscher Rat (VR), Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP (AO), Büro Kursell et Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (VoMi). Dans les chapitres quatre à six, on examine les événements menant à la Gleichschaltung des organismes allemands. Bien que les organismes allemands non socialistes nationaux aient maintenu de 1933 au 2 juillet 1938 un certain degré d'autonomie par rapport à l'influence nazie, il n'y a jamais eu aucun doute que les organismes allemands socialistes nationaux finiraient par prendre de l'ascendant sur ces derniers. Vers la fin de 1936, les organismes allemands socialistes nationaux ont commencé à réaliser un pouvoir et une influence durables. Vers 1938, les organismes allemands non socialistes nationaux étaient pratiquement impuissants. La Gleichschaltung des organismes allemands reflète alors la Gleichschaltung qui s'est produite à tous les niveaux de la société en Allemagne après la nomination d'Adolf Hitler comme chancelier le 30 janvier 1933.

Introduction

The Peace Treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St. Germain greatly increased the number of Germans living outside Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This body of Germans who resided in Europe outside Germany, Austria and Switzerland are commonly referred to as the Volksdeutsche. Although the Treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St-Germain and the Minority Treaties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece and Rumania contained certain protections for the Volksdeutsche, the increase of the Volksdeutsche in Europe following Peace Settlements necessitated the creation of a number of organizations in Germany. to provide aid to the Volksdeutsche. Until the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933, the existing Germandom organizations were remarkably free of National Socialist influence. Following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933, the field of Germandom was increasingly influenced by National Socialist ideology. The Germandom organizations after January 1933 can therefore be classified as non-National Socialist Germandom organizations and National Socialist Germandom organizations. The Nazification of the Germandom organizations is the major focus of this study. The process of Nazification was neither a smooth or efficient process; it was not until July 1938 that the National Socialist Germandom organizations achieved total dominance over the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations.

The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi was the National Socialist Germandom organization that gained total dominance and influence in the field of

Germandom. The VoMi was formed in 1935, although it was originally referred to as the Büro Kursell after its' leader Otto von Kursell, in order to replace the non-National Socialist Volksdeutscher Rat or VR. The VoMi's rise of influence coincided with the rise of influence of the Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler. Originally the deputy Führer Rudolf Hess possessed the most significant influence in the field of Germandom. His friendship with the prominent non-National Socialist Germandom worker Karl Haushofer reinforced Hess's prominent position in the field of Germandom. As the non-National Socialist Germandom workers lost influence, so too did Rudolf Hess. Heinrich Himmler emerged as the most influential figure in the field of Germandom by 1938. He successfully completed the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations by placing influential SS personnel in the leadership of the VoMi. After August 1939, Hitler gave Himmler responsibility for the German resettlement in Europe which would inevitably follow her conquests. Himmler therefore used the VoMi, under his capacity as Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (RKFDV), as an extension of the SS. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the role of the VoMi significantly changed. Increasingly, Himmler used the VoMi as a recruiting body for his Waffen SS. The Volksdeutsche were also increasingly used as the basis of Hitler's new order.

This study examines the development of the Germandom organizations from 1919, and in increasing detail after 30 January 1933, until July 1938. Although much literature has been published about the Nazification of the Germandom

organizations, none offer a sufficiently comprehensive examination of the period from 1933 until 1938. For the period from 1933 until 1938, numerous documents that pertain to the Germandom organizations have been published. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen has published a two volume set entitled Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk. Not surprisingly, this work includes a major portion of Karl Haushofer's writings. Another important primary source that was published by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen is Hans Steinacher. Bundesleiter des VDA, 1933-1937: Erinnerungen und Dokumente. This work comprises various papers, letters and memoranda by Hans Steinacher who was the non-National Socialist leader of the Verein für Deutschtum im Ausland. An invaluable source for the history of the VoMi is the thirty eight reels of Case VIII of the Nuremberg Trials. The testimony of Werner Lorenz, the leader of the VoMi from 10 January 1937 until the end of the war, is particularly valuable. A fair number of documents are also readily available in Documents on German Foreign Policy: Series C and D. Numerous secondary works have dealt with the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations although none offer a comprehensive view. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen's Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik, 1933-1938, is probably the best work to date concerning the Gleichschaltung. Valdis Lumans's Himmler's Auxiliaries is also an excellent work although his study focuses upon the VoMi's activities during the war years. It serves as an excellent companion to Jacobsen's Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik, 1933-1938 which stops in 1938. Robert L. Koehl's RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945; A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of

Germandom, also an excellent work, only covers the VoMi's activities during the war years. The focus of Koehl's study is however, as its title suggests, the RKFDV of which the VoMi was a subsidiary. Ronald M. Smelser's The Sudeten Problem, 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy also remains a valuable work. Although the focus of Smelser's study is the Sudeten problem, his description of the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations is extremely thorough. Anthony Komjathy and Rebecca Stockwell's German Minorities and the Third Reich: Ethnic Germans of East Central Europe between the Wars thoroughly addresses the differences amongst the German minorities of Europe although their treatment of the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations is incomplete. It is, as its title suggests, limited by both geography and time. The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations is a subject, therefore, that has received considerable treatment by historians although further scholarship is definitely still needed. Past examinations of the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations have not sufficiently explained and outlined the reasons behind the slow process of the Nazification of the Germandom organizations. This work, I hope, furthers understanding of this complicated process.

This study would not have been possible without the encouragement and support from my thesis advisor Professor Peter Hoffmann. I would like to thank him for his invaluable comments, the suggestions he made and his patience that was constant throughout my study. Finally, I would like to thank Elisa Arnold for her constant support and understanding. Without her, this study could never have

succeeded.



Chapter 1: The Volksdeutsche in the Inter-War Period

'Take the rights of minorities. Nothing, I venture to say, is more likely to disturb the peace of the world than the treatment which might in certain circumstances be meted out to minorities. And therefore, if the Great Powers are to guarantee the peace of the world in any sense, is it unjust that they should be satisfied that the proper and necessary guarantees have been given?'¹

On 28 September 1918, General Erich Ludendorff and Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg demanded that the German government accept peace terms based on President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. During the evening of 3 October, the German government under Chancellor Prince Max of Baden took Ludendorff's and Hindenburg's advice and asked President Wilson to bring about a restoration of peace on the basis of the principles he had laid down in two addresses to a joint session of Congress on 8 January 1918 and on 11 February 1918. On 8 January 1918, President Wilson outlined to a joint session of Congress his peace programme which contained fourteen points. Points 7 to 14 inclusive were concerned with territorial questions, nationality and self-determination. Points 7 and 8 stipulated that the occupied territories in Belgium and France be evacuated and restored. Further, Wilson demanded that Alsace-Lorraine be returned to France. The frontiers of Italy would be readjusted along lines of nationality according to point 9. Point 10 demanded the opportunity for

¹President Woodrow Wilson's address to the plenary meeting of the Peace Conference on 31 May 1919 in United States Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, (Washington, 1943), vol. III, p. 406. (Hereafter: Papers)

autonomous development for the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Rumanian, Serbian and Montenegrin territory would be evacuated and restored. Serbia's territory would be expanded to the Adriatic Sea. Point 12 addressed the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The parts of the Ottoman Empire that were predominantly Turkish had their sovereignty guaranteed while the other nationalities were also guaranteed an opportunity for autonomous development. President Wilson demanded the creation of an independent and autonomous Poland according to point 13. Point 14 called for the creation of a general association of nations which would be empowered to afford mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to states of all sizes.² In a speech before a joint session of Congress on 11 February, Wilson outlined four principles which he believed essential for a permanent peace in Europe. Points three and four dealt specifically with the issue of minorities.

Third, every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states; and

Fourth, that all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world.³

²The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 45: Nov. 11 1917 - Jan. 5 1918, ed. by Arthur S. Link (Princeton, 1984), pp. 536-539. (Hereafter: Wilson)

³Wilson, vol. 46, p. 323.

President Wilson continued on 11 February 1918 by further emphasizing before the joint session of Congress the need for self-determination.

Peoples are not to be handed about from one sovereignty to another by an international conference or an understanding between rivals and antagonists. National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase, it is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril.⁴

Although the principles laid down by President Wilson in his fourteen point programme which was delivered to a joint session of Congress on 8 January 1918 and his speech before a joint session of Congress on 11 February 1918 paved the way for the armistice agreement which was signed on 11 November 1918, the Peace Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain-en-Laye and Trianon did not resemble the principles outlined above.

On 18 January 1919, the peace conference between the Allied and Associated Powers was formally opened in Paris. Seventy delegates representing twenty-seven of the victorious powers attended the conference although the United States, France and Great Britain were actually in control of the conference. President Wilson advocated a new pattern of international relations at the Paris Peace Conference. He suggested the creation of a League of Nations which would be empowered to secure and maintain peace in Europe. The Minister President of France, Georges Clemenceau, however, was intent on security and revenge; he sought to permanently eliminate Germany as a possible threat. Since France had

⁴Ibid., pp. 293-294.

lost Russia as an alliance partner due to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Clemenceau sought measures to ensure France's security. Great Britain, under the leadership of Prime Minister David Lloyd George, occupied the middle position between the United States and France. Lloyd George, like Clemenceau, desired to reduce Germany's threat as a potential enemy. The British Prime Minister also shared President Wilson's belief that "only an economically stable, anti-Bolshevik, crisis-free Germany represented a genuine guarantee for a peaceful Europe."⁵ These differences between the three major Allied powers that led to prolonged negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference culminated in the Treaty of Versailles, signed by Germany on 28 June; the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye, signed by Austria on 10 September 1919; the Treaty of Neuilly, signed by Bulgaria on 27 November 1919; the Treaty of Trianon, signed by Hungary on 4 June 1920; and the Treaty of Sèvres, signed by Turkey on 10 August 1920. For the purposes of the present work, only the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon will be examined since it was only these treaties that affected the Volksdeutsche or the German minorities residing in states other than Germany, Austria or Switzerland. Before the issue of minorities can be considered, the changes to the map of Europe must be outlined following the promulgation of the treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon.

Although the three major Allied Powers differed on many issues, they all

⁵Marshall M. Lee and Wolfgang Michalka, German Foreign Policy 1917-1933: Continuity or Break?, (New York, 1987), p. 24.

agreed on the process of national reorganization based upon the concept of self-determination. The principle of self-determination, however, was not applied equally to all the nations of Europe. The German delegation quoted President Wilson's speeches of 11 February and 4 July 1918 on 29 May 1919; "[n]o territory may be separated from Germany which by centuries of peaceful union [the territories referred to here were Upper Silesia and the Saar region] with the German state has indisputably proved that it belongs to the nation [...]."⁶ Germany's delegation at the Paris Peace Conference then declared that plebiscites be held in all areas that were to be transferred following the ratification of the peace. They desired that specific guarantees be granted to those German nationals who would obtain minority status due to the territorial changes effected by the various peace treaties. "Those minorities must be allowed to cherish their German characteristics, especially by the concession of the right to support and frequent German schools and churches and to publish German newspapers. It would be well if a still more complete cultural autonomy could be procured, on the basis of natural land registers."⁷ In order to gain some lenience from the Allied powers, the German delegation promised that the various non-German minorities living within Germany's borders would be treated according to the same principles agreed to at the Paris Peace Conference. Despite these conciliatory gestures, the German

⁶Papers, vol. VI, p. 822.

⁷Ibid., p. 823.

delegation, led by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, attacked the Allied and Associate Powers' implementation of the right of self-determination. "The right of self-determination of nations must not be a principle which is applied solely to the prejudice of Germany, it must rather hold good in all States alike and especially be also applied where population [sic.] of the German race wish to be united to the German Empire."⁸

On 16 June 1919, Minister President Clemenceau, the President of the Peace Conference answered Brockdorff-Rantzau's attack of their implementation of the principle of self-determination. His response to Brockdorff-Rantzau's claims only reiterated the Allied and Associate Powers' aim to create a just peace. "There can be no doubt as to the intention of the Allied and Associated Powers to base the settlement of Europe on the principle of freeing oppressed peoples, and re-drawing natural borders as far as possible in accordance with the will of the people concerned."⁹ Clemenceau agreed with Brockdorff-Rantzau that plebiscites should be held in any area where the will of the population remained in doubt. In the 'Reply of the Allied and Associated Powers to the Observations of the German Delegation' of 16 June 1919, the Allied and Associated Powers agreed that certain rights should be guaranteed to those German nationals who, due to the stipulations of Versailles, would reside in territories to be transferred from the German Empire.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p.930.

"The Allied and Associated Powers are prepared to accord guarantees, under the protection of the League of Nations, for the educational, religious and cultural rights of the German minorities in territories transferred from the German Empire to the new states created by the Treaty."¹⁰ It was unclear, however, whether those Germans living in those areas which would be ceded to France, Belgium and Denmark would also receive the guarantees outlined above. Although the Allied and Associated Powers did offer guarantees to those Germans residing in the newly created states, the territorial stipulations, to which the German delegation objected, remained in the final version of the Treaty of Versailles.

Articles 31 to 117 of the Treaty of Versailles addressed the territorial revisions of the former German Empire. The Treaty stipulated that Germany return Alsace-Lorraine to France; Germany would also cede Moresnet, Eupen and Malmédy to Belgium although, according to Article 34, a plebiscite was to be held in both Eupen and Malmédy six months following the cession of the two territories. The Saar region, with her valuable coal basin, was to be placed under international administration for fifteen years after which a plebiscite would be held. Although the Saar was under international administration, France would exploit the German mines in the area. Northern and central Schleswig would decide their allegiance by plebiscite. The Hultschin district was to be ceded to Czechoslovakia while Posen and West Prussia would be ceded to Poland. The cession of Posen and West Prussia

¹⁰Papers, vol. VI, p. 941.

to Poland created a Polish corridor which separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Danzig and its surroundings would become a Free City under the protection of the League of Nations. A plebiscite was to be held in Upper Silesia. Memel would be ceded to the Allied and Associated Powers. Finally, Germany had to renounce all claims to her former colonies.

On 28 June, the treaty was signed in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles by Hermann Müller (the Foreign Minister in the government formed on 20 June 1919 by the Social Democrat Gustav Bauer) and the Minister of Communications, Johannes Bell (of the Centre Party).

On 20 February 1920, the plebiscite held in Schleswig resulted in a division of territory; people in the northern zone chose to join Denmark while those residing in the southern portion decided to remain with Germany. On 20 September 1920, by decree of the League of Nations, Eupen and Malmédy remained in Belgium although no plebiscite had been held. The concept of self-determination was wilfully ignored since five-sixths of the 600 000 inhabitants in Eupen and Malmédy were German speaking. On 20 March 1921, the population in Silesia decided by plebiscite to remain in Germany. Despite this decision of 20 March 1921, the League of Nations decided on 20 October 1922 to partition Silesia. Germany received more than half of its territory and a majority of the Silesian population while Poland received the principal mining and industrial areas. Germany lost, as a result of the territorial dispositions of Versailles, roughly "15 per cent of her agricultural production, about 20 per cent of her coal, iron and

steel industry, and 6-7 per cent of her processing industry."¹¹ The significant loss of the German population due to the Treaty of Versailles will be outlined in a later paragraph. The territorial revisions and the subsequent increase of the German minority in Europe following the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles seem moderate, however, when compared to the changes that followed the ratification of the treaties of Saint Germain and, especially, Trianon.

Austria signed the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye on 10 September 1919. She formally recognized the independence of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary. Article 27 outlined other relatively minor territorial revisions. In addition to the territories lost due to the creation of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Austria ceded the Eastern Galician lowlands which had formerly reached the Russian frontier at Brody to Poland together with the cities of Cracow, Lemberg, Przemysl and Tarnopol. The Trentino territory, the South Tyrol, Istria and Trieste were ceded to Italy. The union of Austria with Germany was forbidden unless it was consented to by the Council of the League of Nations. Hungary signed the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920. Due to the territorial stipulations in the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary's total population fell 61.8% from 20,886,487 persons to only 7,980,143.¹² As in the case of the Treaty of St. Germain, the

¹¹Eberhard Kolb, The Weimar Republic, (London, 1988), p. 29.

¹²Theodor Schieder, ed., Documents on the Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Central Europe: vol. II. The Fate of the Germans in Hungary. (Göttinger, 1961), p. 3.

main purpose for the realignment of states in South-Eastern Europe was to "satisfy the demands of the Successor States which enjoyed the support of the victorious powers."¹³ Hungary lost more than two-thirds of her territory due to Trianon. Her pre-Trianon borders covered 325,411 square kilometres while her post-Trianon borders covered only 92,963 square kilometres. The new borders of Hungary were outlined in Article 27 of the Treaty of Trianon. To Austria, Hungary ceded western Hungary, or the Burgenland, which was roughly 4,020 square kilometres and contained a population of 291,618 persons.¹⁴ To Czechoslovakia, Hungary ceded Slovakia and the Carpatho-Ukraine which amounted to roughly 61,633 square kilometres and contained a population of 3,517,568 persons. To Yugoslavia, Hungary ceded Croatia-Slovenia and part of the Banat of Temesvar which equalled roughly 20,551 square kilometres and contained a population of roughly 1,509,295 persons. Rumania obtained the most significant gains as a consequence of Trianon. Hungary ceded the remaining portion of the Banat, Transylvania and part of the Hungarian plain. Due to these acquisitions, Rumania gained 103,093 square kilometres (an area larger than the whole of rump Hungary) and received an increase in her population of 5,257,467 persons. Italy received an area of only 21 square kilometres although the territory contained a population of 49,806

¹³Schieder, vol. II, p. 5.

¹⁴These and subsequent figures are taken from table 23 in Joseph Rothschild, East Central Europe between the Two World Wars, (Seattle, 1988), p. 155.

persons. Hungary, therefore, suffered immensely due to the Treaty of Trianon.

The multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled by the Treaties of St. Germain and Trianon into small Successor States whose basis for existence lay in the concept of self-determination. Winston Churchill described the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a "cardinal tragedy."¹⁵ Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and a greatly enlarged Rumania, the principal states to emerge out of the ashes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were created by the Allied and Associated Powers to serve as a barrier against any potential Russian or German expansion. In order for these states to effectively serve as a barrier, their creation or enlargement could not solely be effected along ethnic lines. These new national states "needed to be relatively strong and large formations- in the creation of which economic and strategic considerations were similarly important."¹⁶ It was well known, therefore, that sizable national minorities would reside in each of the aforementioned states. Sizable minorities residing in these newly created states was hardly a new phenomenon; the inhabitants of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania resembled, on a much smaller scale, the inhabitants of the former multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire. The territorial stipulations contained within the Treaty of Versailles also created, albeit on a much smaller scale, an

¹⁵Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. I: The Gathering Storm, (Boston, 1948), p. 10.

¹⁶József Galántai, Trianon and the Protection of Minorities, (New York, 1992), p. 11.

increased German minority in France, Belgium, Denmark and Poland. Now that the territorial stipulations in the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon have been outlined in some detail, the number of ethnic Germans living outside Germany, Austria and Switzerland in the annexed territories or the newly created states must be outlined.

The existing statistics concerning the German minority of Europe following the implementation of the peace treaties can be somewhat misleading since a large German minority existed in Europe before the territorial changes of 1919-1920. The German term used to refer to all members of the German minorities immediately following the First World War was *Minderheit* which referred to all Germans living in states other than Germany, Austria or Switzerland. This numerical term, however, "ignored the diversity of *Volksdeutsche* living within one state, and for many Germans it did not have enough of a *völkisch* ring."¹⁷ Hans-Adolf Jacobsen categorized the scattered German minorities of the world into five groups. The first group consisted of those Germans who, due to the Treaty of Versailles, lived in territories that had become separated from the Reich. The second group consisted of Germans who lived in the formerly Russian but newly independent states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. The third group consisted of Germans who lived in the states created out of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire

¹⁷Valdis O. Lumans, Himmler's Auxiliaries: The *Volksdeutsche* Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945, (Chapel Hill, 1993), p. 23.

excluding those Germans who resided in the German Austrian Republic. The fourth group consisted of Germans who lived in isolated colonies, such as the German colonies located in Russian territory. The fifth and final group of Germans living outside the borders of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, as outlined by Jacobsen, consisted of Germans who lived overseas.¹⁸

Although Jacobsen aptly categorized the basic differences that existed between the German minorities scattered around the world, he failed to outline the various sub-groups that existed within each category. For example, in Rumania, following the Treaty of Trianon, there existed a significant German minority in Transylvania, the Banat, Bukovina (or Buchenland) and Bessarabia. These various groups differed greatly from one another historically due to various German migrations beginning in the 12th century. The historical diversity that existed within the German minorities in Rumania created differences in their social, economic and denominational structure.¹⁹ The differences between members of the German minority in Rumania parallel the differences that existed between the German minorities in the rest of Europe; the German minorities of Europe were by no means homogeneous. The different categories separating the German minorities of the world into five groups, as well as the diversity within each of these categories, should be considered when one examines the number of ethnic Germans

¹⁸Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik: 1933-1938, (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), pp. 160-161.

¹⁹Schieder, vol. III, p. 5.

who lived outside Germany and Austria following the implementation of the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon.

In 1921, Poland had an estimated population of roughly 27,193,000 persons. ²⁰ The German minority in Poland, at this time, numbered roughly 1,036,000 persons or 3.8% of Poland's population. Danzig itself had a population of 365,000 persons of which Germans numbered 350,000. Czechoslovakia had an estimated population of 13,617,172 persons of which the German minority numbered 3,123,568 persons or 23.36% of the Czechoslovakian population. Out of Yugoslavia's total population of 12,017,323 persons, the German minority numbered 518,400 persons or 4.31% of the total Yugoslavian population. Out of Hungary's total population of 7,615,117 persons, the German minority numbered 551,221 persons or 7.24% of the total Hungarian population. Out of Rumania's estimated population of 16,250,000 persons, the German minority numbered roughly 804,000 persons or 4.9% of the total Rumanian population. Austria's loss of the South Tyrol to Italy left 280,000 Germans within Italy's borders although this represented only 0.68% of Italy's total population of 41,000,000 persons. Out of Latvia's total population of 1,540,500 persons, the

²⁰Unless otherwise indicated, the figures in the following paragraph were taken from: The Encyclopaedia Britannica. The Three New Supplementary Volumes constituting with the Volumes of the Latest Standard Edition: The 13th Edition. Volume II. Fabre to Oyama, (New York, 1926) p. 932; Wilhelm Winkler, Deutschtum in aller Welt: Bevölkerungsstatistische Tabellen, (Vienna, 1938); Wilhelm Winkler, Statistisches Handbuch der europäischen Nationalitäten, (Vienna and Leipzig, 1931).

German minority numbered 58,000 persons or 3.76% of Latvia's total population. Out of Lithuania's total population of 2,170,000 persons, the German minority numbered roughly 140,000 persons or 6.45% of Lithuania's total population. Estonia, out of an estimated population of 1,106,400 persons, possessed a German minority that numbered roughly 18,000 persons or 1.6% of Estonia's total population. In France, out of a total population of 39,209,518 persons, the German minority numbered roughly 1,700,000 persons or 4.3% of France's total population. Belgium possessed a German minority of roughly 40,000 or 0.53% of Belgium's total population of 7,522,100 persons. The German minority in Denmark numbered roughly 60,000 persons out of a total population of 4,448,401 or 1.35% of the Danish population. The German minority living in the Soviet Union numbered 1,247,000 persons out of an estimated total population of 120,713,801 or 1.03% of the Soviet Union's total population.

According to the statistics provided above, the number of ethnic Germans living in Europe in countries other than Germany, Austria and Switzerland numbered roughly 9,919,189 persons or the total population of a small European country. As mentioned above, the United States, France and Great Britain all agreed that the minorities of Europe should receive rights and protections. Their common desire is illustrated in Articles 62-69 of the Peace Treaty of St. Germain; in Articles 54-60 of the Treaty of Trianon; in Articles 49-57 of the Treaty of Neuilly; in Articles 37-45 of the Treaty of Lausanne which replaced the Treaty of Sèvres on 24 July 1923. These portions of the various peace treaties guaranteed

certain fundamental rights and offered protections for the minorities of Europe. The fundamental rights and protections that were guaranteed to the minorities of Europe in the various peace treaties were extended in the Minority Treaties signed by Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Greece, "and [were] later incorporated in or covered by the Minorities Declarations made by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Albania."²¹

During the Preliminary Peace Conference Plenary Session on 31 May 1919, Rumania's Foreign Minister and Plenipotentiary Delegate at the peace conference, Mr. Jean J. C. Bratiano, illustrated his opposition to the imposition of the various Minority Treaties. He declared that Rumania did not "'deserve the situation [...] it is sought to impose on her to-day. In any case, we stand here [...] to establish the right of equality of great and small states, and to set up rules which may henceforth serve both as principles and precedents."²² President Wilson's response to Bratiano's protest was almost threatening in nature. It did, however, provide a degree of justification for the Allied and Associate Power's imposition of their will.

"Mr. Bratiano - and I speak of his suggestions with the utmost respect-suggested that we could not, so to say, invade the sovereignty of Rumania, an ancient sovereignty, and make certain prescriptions with regard to the rights of minorities. But I beg him to observe that he is overlooking the fact that he is asking the sanction of the Allied and

²¹William O'Sullivan Molony, Nationality and the Peace Treaties, (London, 1934) p. 71.

²²Papers, vol. III, p. 400.

Associated Powers for great additions of territory which come to Rumania by the common victory of arms, and that, therefore, we are entitled to say: 'If we agree to these additions of territory we have the right to insist upon certain guarantees of peace.'²³

Although President Wilson did not explain the moral motivations behind the Allied and Associated Powers' desire to impose treaties protecting minority rights, the justification he offered to the Rumanian delegation was both direct and honest. Minister President Georges Clemenceau filled in the void of Wilson's response when he aptly outlined the moral justification of the Allied and Associated Powers behind their desire to impose treaties that would ensure fundamental rights and protections for minorities in a letter to M. Ignace Paderewski, the Plenipotentiary Delegate representing Poland who was the President of the Polish Council of Ministers and the Polish Foreign Affairs Minister. Clemenceau wrote to M. Paderewski on 24 June 1919:

It is by [the Principal Allied and Associated Powers'] decision that Polish sovereignty is being re-established over the territories in question and that the inhabitants of these territories are being incorporated in the Polish nation. It is on the support which the resources of these Powers will afford to the League of Nations that for the future Poland will to a large extent depend for the secure possession of these territories. There rests, therefore, upon these Powers an obligation, which they cannot evade, to secure in the most permanent and solemn form guarantees for certain essential rights which will afford to the inhabitants the necessary protection whatever changes may take place in the internal constitution of the Polish State.²⁴

²³ Papers, vol. III, p. 407.

²⁴A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, vol. V: Economic Reconstruction and Protection of Minorities, ed. by H.W.V.

Clemenceau's letter of 24 June 1919, therefore, demonstrated his belief that the minorities of Europe should possess fundamental rights and should be offered protections against their host country.

The first Minority Treaty, and the subsequent model for the rest of the Minority Treaties, was signed between Poland and the Principal Allied and Associated Powers on 28 June 1919. The protection of minorities and their fundamental rights were dealt with in the twelve articles that formed Chapter 1 of the Polish Minority Treaty. In Article 1 of the Polish Minority Treaty, Poland agreed to regard Articles 2 through 8 inclusive as fundamental laws. "[N]o law, regulation or official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation or official action prevail over them."²⁵ In Article 2, Poland agreed to provide protection of life and liberty regardless of nationality, language, race or religion. All inhabitants of Poland were also "entitled to the free exercise, whether public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, whose practices are not inconsistent with public order or public morals."²⁶ It was unclear, however, who would decide what exactly constituted an inconsistency with public morals or even who would decide what those morals were.

Articles 3,4,5 and 6 dealt with the issue of nationality. These articles

Temperley (London, 1921), p. 435. (Hereafter: History)

²⁵History, vol. V, p. 429.

²⁶Ibid., p. 440.

"guaranteed people the right to continue living in their home area, and obligated the states to grant equal citizenship to all minorities resident within their new borders."²⁷ Peoples not of Polish descent were given the option to remain in their place of residence and thereby acquire Polish citizenship. If they decided to retain their former citizenship, they would have to leave Poland. Certain constraints upon these freedoms were imposed however. Article 3 of the Polish Minority Treaty referred directly to Article 91 of the Treaty of Versailles which stipulated that "German nationals, [...], or their descendants who became resident in [... Poland] after January 1, 1908, will not acquire Polish nationality without a special authorization from the Polish State."²⁸ 1908 is significant because Germany's colonisation policy in Prussian Poland was intensified "by an act empowering the Colonisation Commission to expropriate landowners."²⁹ It was due to this policy that those Germans who settled in Prussian Poland after 1908, as a result of the colonization process, needed special permission to remain in Poland. Article 7 in Poland's Minority Treaty stipulated that all Polish nationals, regardless of race, language or religion, were equal before the law. Freedom of language was a further freedom guaranteed to all Polish nationals. "No restriction shall be imposed on the free use by any Polish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce,

²⁷Galántai, pp. 59-60.

²⁸Papers, vol. XIII, p. 221.

²⁹L.P. Mair, The Protection of Minorities, (London, 1928), p. 38.

in religion, in the press or in publications of any kind, or at public meetings."³⁰ Article 8, the last of the fundamental laws, stipulated that all Polish nationals who belonged to racial, religious or linguistic minorities "shall have an equal right to establish, manage, and control at their own expense charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein."³¹ Article 9 was essentially a supplement to Article 8; in areas where there was a concentrated minority, the Polish government would allow the children within these communities to receive their elementary schooling in their own tongue although instruction in the Polish language would still be obligatory. Articles 10 and 11 dealt specifically with the considerable Jewish minority in Poland. Article 10 stipulated that the Educational Committees appointed locally by the Jewish communities of Poland were responsible for the distribution of the public funds that were allotted to them. Article 11 guaranteed for the Jews the right to observe their Sabbath. Article 12, which closed the section of minority rights and protections guaranteed to all minorities living in Poland contained Poland's agreement that the rights and protections outlined in Articles 1 to 12 of Poland's Minority Treaty were guaranteed by the League of Nations. Furthermore, Poland agreed that none of the fundamental laws, Articles 2 through 8 inclusive, could be modified without the

³⁰History, vol. V, p. 441.

³¹Ibid., p. 441.

assent of a majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The second chapter of Poland's Minority Treaty, which included Articles 13 to 21 inclusive, "covered some of the areas where such agreements were necessary."³² The subsequent Minority Treaties signed by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece and Rumania were essentially based upon the first twelve articles of the Polish Minority Treaty. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece signed their respective Minority Treaties on 10 September 1919 while Rumania only ratified her Minority Treaty on 9 December 1919. Although the Polish Minority Treaty was the paradigm of all the Minority Treaties, differences emerged to meet the peculiar circumstances of the various countries. The aims of the Minority Treaties were first to establish the right of nationality of every inhabitant within the aforementioned states and then to outline the rights each inhabitant was to enjoy.

The guarantees of religious toleration and the protection of life and liberty were, according to Clemenceau, "elementary rights, which are, as a matter of fact, secured in every civilised State."³³ The right of minorities to maintain their own institutions and languages was therefore, according to Clemenceau, a fundamental right. The protections guaranteed in the Minority Treaties, the Allied and Associate Powers hoped, would encourage the various minorities to retain their culture and, by definition, discourage them from assimilating. Unfortunately, it is not within

³²Galántai, p. 61.

³³History, vol. V, p. 435.

the scope of this work to examine the success or failure of the above treaties; it is safe to say, however, that the emphasis upon individual rights in the Minority Treaties overrode the rights of the various ethnic groups. The resolutions by the League of Nations concerning minorities, therefore, "intended to prevent the oppression of minorities, not the assimilation of ethnic groups"³⁴ due to the emphasis upon individuality. According to historian Eberhard Kolb, the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the German Empire on the basis of self-determination had proved to be a failure.

The principle invoked was the self-determination of peoples, but it soon proved that, given the medley of races in the area and the chauvinism of the ruling nationalities, self-determination was not a reliable basis for a stable international system. None of the new states succeeded in solving its minority problems, as might have done by means of a federal constitution or a wide degree of cultural autonomy. The instability that resulted was increased by deep-seated economic and social problems. Both republics and monarchies in the area sought a remedy to the 'crisis of postwar democracy', which set in soon after the war, by turning to authoritarian or semi-authoritarian forms of government.³⁵

Now that the background concerning the German minorities living in Europe following the conclusion of the First World War and the basic rights and protections guaranteed to them in the Peace Treaties and the Minority Treaties has been provided, Germany's policy towards the German minority in Europe during the

³⁴Anthony Komjathy and Rebecca Stockwell, German Minorities and the Third Reich: Ethnic Germans of East Central Europe between the Wars, (New York, 1980), p. X.

³⁵Kolb, p. 55.

Weimar Republic must be outlined.

From the signature of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 until the occupation of the Ruhr by French and Belgian troops on 11 January 1923, German foreign policy was influenced by Germany's domestic situation. The major task facing the German diplomats during this early phase of the Weimar Republic "was to confront the Western Powers and guarantors of the Treaty of Versailles, in the hope of negotiating more liberal peace terms and indeed demonstrating the unrealistic nature of the treaty itself."³⁶ Since Germany was initially excluded from the League of Nations and was therefore denied participation in the international system for the protection of minorities, "Berlin lacked direct means of forcing the Minority States to fulfil their obligations."³⁷ Gustav Stresemann, Chancellor from 12 August 1923 until 23 November 1923, and Foreign Minister from 12 August 1923 until his death on 3 October 1929, actively manipulated the minority question. On 3 February 1925, a debate took place in Germany's Foreign Ministry regarding entry into the League of Nations. A majority in the Foreign Ministry decided to permit the Reich Government to seek entry into the League. Until Germany finally gained entry into the League of Nations on 8 September 1926, (the German delegation only entered the hall of the League, the Salle de la

³⁶Lee and Michalka, p. 34.

³⁷Carole Fink, "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926-1933", Central European History, vol. V (1972), pp. 330-357, p. 335.

Reformation in Geneva, on 10 September 1926), Stresemann used the minority question to defend the German government's decision to pursue the unpopular policy of entering into the League of Nations.

Entry into the League of Nations was for Germany a natural development following the ratification of the Locarno Treaties on 1 December 1925. Entry into the League was integral to the Locarno Treaties because not until Germany took her seat at Geneva could the Minority Treaties come into effect. Germany, France and Belgium, agreed, in the Locarno Treaties, to refrain from using force to alter the existing frontiers as prescribed by the Versailles Treaty. Germany also concluded arbitration treaties with Belgium, France, Poland and Czechoslovakia. France concluded a treaty for mutual assistance with Poland and Czechoslovakia in case of attack by Germany. "By the Locarno treaty Germany recognized her western frontier as fixed by the Treaty of Versailles, but she expressly reserved her claim for a revision of the eastern frontier."³⁸ Once in the League, Germany could further her revisionist aims concerning the Treaty of Versailles.

Gustav Stresemann declared in an anonymous article for the *'Hamburger Fremdenblatt'* on 14 September 1925 that Germany "must be the champion of the German minorities in Europe; she must be the great motherland of the German cultural community, and take care that the rights of the German minorities are respected in accordance with the terms of the international treaties in those

³⁸Kolb, p. 62.

countries that had undertaken them."³⁹ The protection of the German minorities remained for Stresemann one of his three foreign policy objectives. In a letter to the former Crown Prince, written on 7 September 1925, Stresemann outlined these aims.

In my opinion there are three great tasks that confront German foreign policy in the more immediate future-

In the first place the solution of the Reparations question in a sense tolerable for Germany, and the assurance of peace, which is an essential premise for the recovery of our strength.

Secondly, the protection of Germans abroad, those 10 to 12 millions of our kindred who now live under a foreign yoke in foreign lands.

The third great task is the readjustment of our Eastern frontiers; the recovery of Danzig, the Polish corridor, and a correction of the frontier in Upper Silesia.⁴⁰

The readjustment of Germany's Eastern frontiers and the possible reunion with Austria depended upon the success of Stresemann's policy towards the German minorities. Stresemann believed his task as 'protector' of the German minorities of Europe could best be accomplished through the machinery of the League of Nations. "Our anxiety on behalf of Germans abroad is an argument in favour of our joining the League."⁴¹ On 10 June 1925, however, the League of Nations Council made it impossible for Germany to pursue an active minorities policy as advocated by Stresemann. According to the system originally set up by the League

³⁹Gustav Stresemann, His Diaries, Letters, and Papers, vol. II, ed. by Eric Sutton (London, 1937), p. 159.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 503.

⁴¹Stresemann, vol. II, p. 504.

of Nations Council, minorities were allowed to submit petitions directly to the Security Council. The League's Director of Minorities, "after ruling on a petition's 'receivability,' [would send] a copy, along with the accused government's 'observations,' to all Council members, who could, if they wished, place the complaint on the Council agenda."⁴² A committee of three Council members would then examine all petitions and complaints put before the League. This committee would decide whether each petition or complaint merited the Council's attention.⁴³ Following investigations by the Committee of Three, negotiations would then begin between the League's Minorities Director and the accused state. If the accused state agreed to certain concessions, the process would then be complete. Unfortunately, these protections existed only in those states that possessed Minority Treaties; there was no universal protection for minorities. On 10 June 1925, however, the League of Nations Council voted to exclude from the Committee of Three any of its members who were either ethnically related to the petitioner or who bordered on an accused member's territory. Stresemann was not discouraged by these developments which effectively limited his desire to pursue an active policy.

Stresemann outlined the strategy he believed Germany should follow following her entry into the League of Nations in a document entitled

⁴²Fink, pp. 332-333.

⁴³Ibid., p. 340.

'Aufzeichnung über die aussenpolitische Notwendigkeit einer Regelung des Minderheitenrechtes innerhalb des Reiches'.

Der größte Teil der deutschen Minderheiten in Europa, insgesamt etwa 9 Millionen Menschen, ringt heute um seine kulturelle Erhaltung und steht insbesondere dort, wo ein Anschluß an das Reich geographisch möglich wäre, in einem Kulturkampfe mit dem Staatsvolke, bei dem es um Leben oder Sterben geht. Während einige dieser Minderheiten [...] meist nur gegen die allgemeine Tendenz der Staaten Europas, sich nach außen und innen als einheitlichen Nationalstaat darzustellen, zu kämpfen haben und Kompromisse hier möglich erscheinen, wird die für das Deutsche Reich wichtigste Gruppe der Minderheiten, deren Siedlungsgebiete unmittelbar an das Deutsche Reich oder an Deutsch-Österreich anstoßen, von den Mehrheitsvölkern immer als eine Irredenta angesehen werden, deren allmähliche Vernichtung oder doch Aufsaugung mit allen Mitteln angestrebt werden muß.

[...] Schon jetzt ist durch die zahlreichen Beschwerden unterdrückter Minderheiten beim Völkerbunde erreicht worden, daß in den Augen der Welt das Minderheitenproblem internationales Interesse erweckt hat und die großzügige Lösung des Problems in Europa als Vorbedingung eines dauernden Friedens angesehen wird. [...]

Voraussetzung für eine erfolversprechende Beschreitung des Weges ist aber, daß jede Möglichkeit des Vorwurfs ausgeschaltet wird, das Reich verlange für die deutschen Minderheiten in Europa Rechte, die es den innerhalb der Reichsgrenzen lebenden fremdnationalen Minderheiten vorenthalte. Daraus ergibt sich die zwingende Notwendigkeit, daß all die Grundrechte, die wir für die deutschen Minderheiten in Europa fordern, um ihnen die zur Erhaltung ihres Deutschtums unbedingt erforderliche kulturelle Freiheit zu sichern, ausnahmslos und in einer jeden Zweifel ausschließenden Form den Minderheiten innerhalb der Reichsgrenzen gewährt sein müssen. ⁴⁴

Before Germany gained entry into the League of Nations, however, Stresemann believed it was necessary to first improve the situation of the various minorities

⁴⁴Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie B: 1925-1933, Bd. I,1 (Göttingen, 1966), p. 203-204. (Hereafter A.D.A.P.)

residing within Germany's borders.

In the period prior to Germany's entry into the League from 3 February 1925 until 8 September 1926, the question of the German minority in the South Tyrol led to a clash with Italy. Although the South Tyrol was detached from Austria, Stresemann "apparently felt that mistreatment of ethnic Germans in that region, or anywhere else for that matter, was of greatest concern to Germany."⁴⁵ On 3 February 1926, Stresemann delivered a speech before the press in which he attacked Italy. He declared that the Italian Government was Germany's enemy in all matters affecting foreign affairs. He blamed Fascism for boasting "of its mission to impress [the] Italian civilization on South Tyrol."⁴⁶ Stresemann then vehemently attacked Benito Mussolini in a speech before the Reichstag on 9 February 1926 in which he replied to a particularly belligerent speech by the Italian leader. Stresemann first attacked the peace settlements and then he criticized Italy's "disregard of the right of self-determination."⁴⁷ In response to Mussolini's argument that Germany had no right to involve herself in the plight of the Germans of the South Tyrol since the territory was annexed from Austria, Stresemann declared "[i]f such tendencies are possible as appear in Signor Mussolini's speech, for that very reason it is the more necessary that Germany should join those nations

⁴⁵Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles: A Fight for Reason, (Stanford, 1953), p. 128.

⁴⁶Stresemann, vol. II, p. 445.

⁴⁷Bretton, p. 128.

which stand together to resist every threat to European peace."⁴⁸

Germany's disagreements concerning the treatment of the German minorities were not exclusively with Italy; Stresemann also took issue with Poland's desire to liquidate property owned by Germans within Poland's borders. When Poland was assigned a Council seat in the March session of 1926 and Germany was refused a seat on the Council, Stresemann was understandably upset. Because Poland contained a great number of former German nationals, the assignment to Poland of a permanent seat served to undermine "the entire *raison d'être* for Germany's membership in the League [...]. The danger was that Poland's 'veto' could serve to sidetrack any considerations of complaints by minorities or to reduce considerations to dilatory matters, if that state was given the preferential status of Council membership."⁴⁹

Following Germany's entry into the League of Nations on 8 September 1926, Stresemann's policy towards the German minorities entered a more active phase. He did not make any effort, however, to alter the League's practice of settling complaints by members of a persecuted minority through private negotiations between the Secretariat's Minorities Director and the accused government. Since Germany would have been barred as an interested party if any individual or group within the German minority complained of maltreatment, Stresemann sought to

⁴⁸Stresemann, vol. II, p. 456.

⁴⁹Bretton, p. 129.

ensure "that German minorities remain a cohesive force in their countries of residence and retained their sense of German identity."⁵⁰ As the number of minority disputes before the League Council increased, Stresemann continued to champion the rights of the German minorities in Europe.

The League Council for 1928 was originally to meet in Geneva but the climate at Geneva affected Stresemann's fragile health. He politely asked that the League Council meet in Lugano. The Council agreed to Stresemann's request and subsequently met on 10 December 1928 under the chairmanship of Aristide Briand, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Count Zaleski, the Polish delegate, on 15 December 1928 accused the German Volksbund (the German minority association in Poland) of "stirring the minorities up against their country of citizenship, of engaging in political agitation, and of being guilty of subversive activities. Organized efforts by the Volksbund, he charged, tended to sap the strength of the Polish state and were calculated to endanger the peace."⁵¹ Following Zaleski's accusation, Stresemann lost his composure and proceeded to pound his fists on the Council table and shout 'Scandalous!'. Stresemann immediately calmed down and answered Zaleski's remarks.

It is with the greatest astonishment that I listened to the speech of the Polish Foreign Minister. This speech- I regret to have to say as much- was wholly inspired by a spirit of hatred towards the German Minorities: it was directed against those who make use of the right

⁵⁰Lee and Michalka, p. 93.

⁵¹Bretton, p. 132.

guaranteed to them by the League and the League Council here assembled.[...]

You have attacked the German National Association [*Volksbund*]. Since when have Minorities been forbidden to establish organizations and bring their grievances before the League Council? [...]

For this reason I thank Herr Dandurand [the Canadian delegate] for his suggestion that the Minority question should be discussed by the League Council, as a matter of principle. Not solely from the standpoint of the German Minorities in Upper Silesia, but from that of Minorities in general, I cannot approve what the Polish representative has said, and I frankly maintain that if the League adopts any other view it will lose much of the esteem it at present enjoys.⁵²

At the March session of the League Council, Stresemann decided to raise the problem of the League's guarantees for the protection of minorities. On 6 March 1929, Stresemann declared what policies he believed should be followed by the Council concerning minority rights.

What I would suggest, and would urge upon the Council for consideration, is first, a careful examination of the possibilities of improving the formal procedure regarding the treatment of petitions; secondly, that we should consider whether the policy of excluding the nations concerned, on such occasions, could not be abandoned, and that they should for the future be invited to be present; thirdly, we should discuss in what way the League can satisfy its duty as a guarantor, apart from the handling of petitions; finally, I am anxious that, in the form I proposed, the nature and extent of the guarantee should be made clear.⁵³

On 13 March 1929, Stresemann wrote to his friend and colleague Geheimrat Kahl that he considered the struggle over the minority question a main reason for his continuance in office. "I regard myself, therefore, as not merely under an

⁵²Stresemann, vol. III, pp. 444-445.

⁵³Stresemann, vol. III, p. 449.

obligation to remain in office until the end of the Paris negotiations, but also until the last struggles over the minority question are finished. I should feel myself a deserter if I abandoned an affair that I had begun in the full view of the nations of the world, or left it to my successor."⁵⁴ Although Stresemann's *raison d'être* was to extend Germany's influence over the minorities, the League Council at the June session in Madrid rejected the revisions Stresemann suggested in March 1929. Unfortunately, there was nothing Stresemann could do to alter the Council's ruling at Madrid. The League Council that met in Madrid in June represented the climax of Stresemann's efforts to solve the minorities question. The minorities question was addressed by Stresemann for the last time on 9 September 1929. He addressed the issues that had been dealt with in the March and May sessions, outlining at great length the disagreements between the two sides. Stresemann suggested that the League should not concern itself with individual grievances but rather, it should concentrate on the minorities as a whole under the treaties already in force.⁵⁵

We are confronted by a problem that, in accordance with the fundamental principle of the new régime created after the War, concerns the League as a whole. If the League devotes itself to this great task with the energy required, an important element in the maintenance of peace will have been established. For peace among the nations will be the better secured, in so far as the indefeatable right of human beings to their mother tongue, their culture, and their religion,

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁵⁵Stresemann, vol. III, p. 616.

is regarded and protected.⁵⁶

Stresemann concluded with a recommendation that a special organisation solely concerned with the treatment of minorities should be created. Such an organisation would, of course, have to include Germany as a member. On 6 October 1929, less than one month following his last appearance before the League Assembly, Gustav Stresemann died of a stroke.

Under Stresemann's successor, Foreign Minister Julius Curtius, the policies of the Wilhelmstraße changed considerably reflecting the 'turn to the Right' of the Brüning government caused by the economic crisis of the depression. Despite the 'turn to the Right' of the Brüning government, Curtius continued Stresemann's initiatives concerning the minorities. The general elections in Poland on 14 November 1930 offered Curtius an opportunity to demand that the League take punitive action against Poland due to the unofficial complaints by the German minority in Upper Silesia concerning oppressive measures taken against them by the Polish Government. The Germans in Upper Silesia, especially the leaders of the ethnic-German political organizations, were frequently intimidated by Polish authorities and were also subjected to frequent abrogation of their suffrage rights. Curtius accused the Polish Government of preventing minority candidates from distributing campaign literature which was a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention. He further accused Polish authorities of arbitrarily invalidating

⁵⁶Stresemann, vol. III, p. 617.

German-minority voting lists. He finally outlined how the *Posener Tageblatt*, the German minority's political organ, due to supposedly 'unsanitary production standards'⁵⁷ was closed down. Surprisingly, Curtius decided not to protest directly to the government in Poland as would normally have been the first step. Instead, he decided to bring the matter to the League Council. This action was significant because it marked the first time a complaint was brought by a League Council member directly to the League without following "the League's official guidelines requiring a prior [official] protest by the minority concerned."⁵⁸ Curtius's policy towards the German minorities was potentially dangerous; Stresemann had never taken such an openly aggressive stance. On 6 January 1931, the Polish representative on the League Council August Zaleski, not surprisingly, denied Curtius's accusations in a letter to the League Council that government-ordered electoral violations had taken place. The League Council met on 21 January 1931 and listened to arguments by Curtius and Zaleski. Curtius began by simply recounting Germany's grievances against Poland. While Zaleski admitted that the Geneva Convention had been violated in the elections, he stated that the violations were minor in nature.

When no agreement was reached, the Council requested that the Japanese

⁵⁷William G. Rattliff, "Julius Curtius, the Minorities Question of 1930-1931, and the *Primat der Innenpolitik*", in German Studies Review, vol. XII (1989), pp. 271-288, p. 279.

⁵⁸Rattliff, p. 279.

Foreign Minister, Mr Yoshizawa, draft a report concerning Germany's allegations. Yoshizawa submitted his report on 24 January 1931. He concluded that minority rights, according to the Geneva Convention, had been violated in Poland. Yoshizawa declared in his report that the Polish government was indirectly responsible for oppressive actions against the German minority in Upper Silesia. Germany's direct appeal to the League of Nations Council was therefore justified in Yoshizawa's opinion. The Polish government was ordered to submit by May "a detailed report setting forth the results of the inquiries in the different cases, as well as the punishments inflicted and the compensation awarded for damage to persons and property."⁵⁹ Curtius, however, refused to accept Poland's report stating that he had not yet been able to study the report with due care. Due to this action which was clearly an attempt to prolong the League's involvement in Germany's minority dispute with Poland, the Council was "irritated at the postponement of this delicate issue [... and] had to wait until [20] September to acknowledge Poland's assurances that henceforth the rights of minorities [in Poland] would be respected."⁶⁰ Curtius's belligerent tone in the Council isolated his government in Geneva despite the improved treatment of the German minority in Poland.

Curtius resigned as Foreign Minister on 3 October 1931 and was succeeded

⁵⁹Arnold Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs: 1932, (London, 1933) p. 367.

⁶⁰Fink, p. 354.

by Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. The last minority dispute between the Weimar Republic and the Polish government concerned the issue of land reform in the Polish 'Corridor'. According to Poland's agrarian statute of 28 December 1925, estates exceeding 180 hectares were to be divided and redistributed to landless citizens. The German minority protested annually to Geneva following the statute of 28 December 1928 that the lists of properties were weighted heavily against German landowners, and that the recipients were overwhelmingly Polish. Brüning, in an action that was uncharacteristically spontaneous, decided to take a landowners' petition from the Committee of Three and brought it directly to the League Council. Brüning's initiative led to a compromise which was in turn rejected on 9 December 1932 by the new German Foreign Minister Baron von Neurath. Brüning, therefore, essentially did nothing to strengthen the position of the German minority in Europe.

The various governments of the Weimar Republic effectively defended and promoted the interests of the German minorities in Europe. Although Germany's various Foreign Ministers depended upon the minority protections set up by the League of Nations, their willingness to collaborate with the League was viewed negatively by some in Germany as an extension of the policy of fulfilment. Many people viewed Germany's willingness to deal with the Allied and Associated Powers following the war as legitimizing the extremely harsh Treaty of Versailles. The policies of the various Weimar governments that were often criticized did, however, better Germany's situation on the continent and in the world. Although Germany's

world status improved, the status of the German minorities was not effectively altered although some of their difficulties were alleviated.

The most effective aid provided to the German minorities of Europe did not take place within the international forum provided by the League of Nations; it was financial. The primary provider of financial aid was the Deutsche Stiftung which was formed in November 1920 and was funded by the German Foreign Ministry as well as the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. The Deutsche Stiftung had an annual budget of roughly 3 million Reichsmarks. Its purpose was to finance cultural activities, maintain German schools and subsidize retired Reich officials living outside the Reich.⁶¹ Another organization, the Ossa, Vermittlungs- und Handelsgesellschaft mbH, later called Vereinigte Finanzkontore GmbH, "die nicht nur die verlorenen Gebiete bedachte, sondern auch geschlossene Siedlungsgebiete, in denen vor dem Weltkrieg Deutsche wohnten. Sie gewährte in erster Linie Wirtschaftskredite an zusammengeschlossene Organisationen und stützte kleinbäuerlichen Besitz."⁶² The Finanzkontore therefore provided credit for Volksdeutsche businesses, industry and agriculture. It was not until Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich on 30 January 1933, however, that the German minorities in Europe had any real hope of attaining a better position within their respective states.

⁶¹Lumans, p. 24.

⁶²Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 166.

Chapter 2: Ideology of the National Socialists

Personalities must rally around the centre of the Volk and race-soul, around that mysterious centre which makes fruitful the very cadence of German Being and Becoming whenever Germany draws close to it.¹

Following the European-wide depression of the late 1920's and the early 1930's, conditions worsened for the German minorities living in the various nations of Europe since they "often appeared to be weathering the crisis better than the rest of the nation."² The atmosphere of distrust that intensified between the Volksdeutsche, ethnic Germans living in countries in Europe other than Germany, Austria or Switzerland, and their host country caused many Volksdeutsche to look to Germany for some sort of salvation. One movement that offered hope of salvation for these ethnic Germans was the National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei [N.S.D.A.P.] or the Nazi party. Although National Socialism was embraced by many ethnic Germans, different aspects appealed to different individuals. "Rather than swallowing National Socialism whole, individual Volksdeutsche, like Reich Germans, more often than not found certain aspects of it to their liking."³ The völkisch ideology of National Socialism and Hitler's commitment to destroy the postwar settlements were, most likely, the most appealing aspects for most Volksdeutsche.

¹Alfred Rosenberg, Race and Race History and other Essays by Alfred Rosenberg, (New York, 1970), p. 97.

²Lumans, p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 28.

The twenty-five point programme of the German Workers Party [D.A.P.]⁴, presented on 24 February 1920 at a public meeting in the Hofbräuhaus, in Munich, demonstrated the nationalist and anti-semitic nature of the party's ideology. Points one and two dealt specifically with the question of the German minority in Europe."¹ We demand the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of national self-determination.² We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and the revocation of the peace treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain."⁵ The Treaty of Trianon was excluded from point two because it had not yet been promulgated. Although the twenty-five point programme offered the National Socialist party a solid foundation, Hitler did not think it unalterable. It was for this reason that Hitler did not place too much importance upon it.

The National Socialist German Workers' Party, with its program of twenty-five points, received a foundation that is bound to be unshakeable. The task of the present members of the movement, and of those to come, must not consist of a critical reshaping of these leading principles, but rather in their pledge to them. [...] For the great number of followers, the nature of our movement will lie less in the letter of our principles but rather in the meaning which we [the

⁴The German Workers Party [D.A.P.], first led by the railway mechanic Anton Drexler and the journalist Karl Harrer, changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers Party [N.S.D.A.P.] in February 1920. Adolf Hitler assumed leadership of the N.S.D.A.P. on 29 July 1921. The twenty-five point programme of the D.A.P. was adopted in full by the N.S.D.A.P.

⁵Nazism 1919-1945: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, vol. I, ed. by J. Noakes and G. Pridham (New York, 1983), p. 14. (Hereafter: Nazism 1919-1945)

leadership] are able to give them.⁶

Hitler believed that a written programme left itself open to interpretation, criticism and, therefore, debate which would weaken the party and the party's leadership. Although Hitler diminished the importance of the twenty-five point programme in Mein Kampf, he maintained that only when all the Volksdeutsche in Europe lived in a common Reich would it be possible for Germany to pursue an expansionist foreign policy.

Common blood belongs in a common Reich. As long as the German nation is unable even to band together its own children in one common State, it has no moral right to think of colonization as one of its political aims. Only when the boundaries of the Reich include even the last German, only when it is no longer possible to assure him of daily bread inside them, does there arise, out of distress of the nation, the moral right to acquire foreign soil and territory.⁷

Hitler maintained, therefore, that the concept of Lebensraum was morally justified only if all the Germans of Europe resided within the boundaries of Germany. Would not territory have to be annexed, however, for Hitler's condition to be met? If the majority of a territory's population was German, such as the Sudetenland or Upper Silesia, would this provide the proper justification for Hitler to annex them and then claim that no aggressive policies had been pursued? Hitler did not want a re-establishment of Germany's Imperial borders which he considered would be absurd. Hitler's territorial aims, therefore, stretched far beyond Germany's

⁶Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, (London, 1939), p. 683.

⁷Ibid., p. 3.

Imperial borders.

The demand for the re-establishment of the frontiers of the year 1914 is political nonsense of such a degree and consequences as to look like a crime. Entirely aside from the fact that the frontiers of the Reich in the year 1914 were everything [sic.] but logical. For they were, in reality, neither complete with respect to the inclusion of people of German nationality, nor intelligent with respect with respect to geo-military appropriateness. [...W]e National Socialists must cling unflinchingly to our foreign-policy aims, that is to guarantee the German nation the soil and territory to which it is entitled on this earth. And this is the only action which, before God and our German posterity, would seem to justify an investment of blood [...]. With this, we National Socialists consciously draw a line through the foreign-policy trend of our pre-War period. We take up at the halting place of six hundred years ago. We terminate the endless German drive to the south and west of Europe, and direct our gaze towards the lands in the east. We finally terminate the colonial and trade policy of the pre-War period, and proceed to the territorial policy of the future.⁸

Hitler's aims regarding the question of the Volksdeutsche were also outlined in his second book written in 1928.

The National Socialist movement which I lead today views its goal as the liberation of our people within and without. [...] It aims thereby to preserve the character of this people, because only under freedom can this find that form which is serviceable to its people. [...] It fights for the required space, because it represents this people's right to life.⁹

Following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933, his aims became more conciliatory concerning the question of the German minorities in Europe. Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on 23 March 1933 demonstrated the

⁸Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 944-950.

⁹Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, (New York, 1974) p. 44.

change in Hitler's policy. "We have particularly at heart the fate of the Germans living outside the borders of the Reich who are allied to us by language, culture, and traditions and who fight hard to retain these values. The national Government is resolved to use all the means at its command to support the rights internationally guaranteed to the German minorities."¹⁰ Hitler publicly, therefore, followed the policy of his predecessors; a policy he had previously criticized. Hitler's continuation of the policy which was formed by his predecessors in the Weimar Republic displayed Hitler's desire to demonstrate the legitimacy of National Socialism, even if it was an illusion.

Although Hitler's policy towards the German minority appeared moderate and reasonable, he successfully exploited the principle of self-determination as no other German statesman before him. He claimed that Germans should obtain the right to self-determination in territories where they constituted a majority of the population. Through Hitler's successful exploitation of this principle and through his application of diplomatic pressure, Hitler "succeeded in annexing Austria, the Sudetenland, and Memel to the Reich. Danzig, which he had hoped to acquire in the same way, finally had to be won by conquest."¹¹ By 1939, however, Hitler could no longer maintain the illusion that he was either a moderate or reasonable

¹⁰Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations 1932-1945, vol. I, ed. by Max Domarus (London, 1990), p. 284.

¹¹Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order, vol. II, (New York, 1974) p. 13.

ruler. In a speech to the Reichstag on 28 April 1939, Hitler illustrated his expansionist tendencies while defending Germany's actions against Austria and Czechoslovakia.

'Not only was the German Reich destroyed and Austria split up into its component parts by the criminals of Versailles, but Germans were also forbidden to acknowledge that community which they had confessed for more than a thousand years. [...] I should have sinned against my call by Providence had I failed by my own endeavour to lead my native country and my German people of the Ostmark back to the Reich and thus to the community of the German people.'

'In doing so, moreover, I have wiped out the most disgraceful side of the Treaty of Versailles. I have once more established the right of self-determination, and done away with the democratic oppression of seven and a half million Germans. [...]'

'2. Bohemia and Moravia. [...] Germany was primarily interested in one thing only, and that was to liberate the nearly four million Germans in that country from their unbearable situation, and to make it possible for them to return to their home country and to the thousand-year-old Reich.'¹²

Hitler's racial doctrine and more specifically his abhorrence against the mixing of races was another aspect of National Socialist ideology which many Volksdeutsche found appealing. The National Socialists' abhorrence against the mixing of races "seemed to justify what they [the Volksdeutsche] had been practising for generations."¹³ Hitler expounded this racial concept at length in Mein Kampf. "The blood-mixing, however, with the lowering of the racial level caused by it, is the sole cause of the dying-off of old cultures; for the people do not

¹²The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939, vol. II, ed. by Norman H. Baynes (New York, 1969), pp. 1609-1612.

¹³Lumans, p. 28.

perish by lost wars, but by the loss of that force of resistance which is contained only in the pure blood."¹⁴ Hitler's racial views were further developed at length in his second book. He declared that the mixing of races between the Volksdeutsche and other cultures would result in their de-Germanization and therefore the standard of their higher race would become lowered.

Consequently of all the Germans in the world there are only [sic.] millions within the present Reich territory, who represent [sic.] per cent of the total number of our people altogether. Of the Germans not united with the motherland, in consequence of the slow loss of dedicated racial comrades the [sic.] must be regarded, [sic.], i.e. a total number of approximately [sic.] million Germans find themselves in a situation which in all human probability will one day cause their de-Germanization.¹⁵

Alfred Rosenberg, the chief ideologue of the Nazi party who in part formulated the National Socialists' racial ideology, wrote that mixed marriages between Romans and non-Romans, an obvious comparison between the Roman Empire and a future German Empire, signified "the collapse of Volk and state."¹⁶

An anti-modern bias was another feature of National Socialist ideology which was attractive to many Volksdeutsche. "Particularly distasteful to many were the political manifestations of modernism- political liberalism and democracy."¹⁷ The National Socialist movement, "according to its structure and its inner organization

¹⁴Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 406.

¹⁵Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, p. 91.

¹⁶Rosenberg, p. 58.

¹⁷Lumans, p. 28.

is anti-parliamentarian; that means in general and in its inner construction it rejects a principle of a decision by the majority, by which the leader is degraded to the position of the executive of the will and the opinion of the others."¹⁸ It is understandable that democracy was distasteful to many Volksdeutsche since a political system based on majority rule and national self-determination would reinforce their minority status.

The glorification of peasants and their ties to the soil was another attractive feature of National Socialist ideology for various Volksdeutsche. "The first consequence [following the First World War] of gravest importance was the weakening of the peasant class. In the same measure in which the latter class diminished, the mass of the proletariat of the great cities grew more and more, till finally the balance was lost entirely."¹⁹ Hitler's glorification of peasants and their ties to the soil was contrasted by his contempt for industrialists and industrial workers. He wrote that an industrialist workers' "essential character is to be seen in the fact that he hardly ever reaches the position of founding an existence of his own in his later life. He is 'without property' in the truest meaning of the word, so that his old age means a torture rather than life."²⁰ According to Hitler, it was the industrial revolution which caused the millions of peasants to leave their villages

¹⁸Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 478.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 315-316.

²⁰Ibid., p. 426.

in order to earn a living in the newly found industries of the mid 19th century. Their transformation of lifestyle from a peasant to an industrial one had a huge impact; "it ruined health and destroyed confidence in a higher law."²¹ Changes in the agricultural system and a reduction of unemployment were given full priority by the Nazi government following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The National Socialists' agricultural policy sought to gain as much independence from foreign sources of supply as possible. Total agricultural independence would be able to safeguard against a potential blockade in times of war. Agricultural independence would also minimize expenditure on imports, thereby keeping as much capital in Germany as possible. The National Socialists' agricultural policy also aimed "to secure a healthy and prosperous peasantry [which was viewed] as the 'blood spring' of the nation."²² This policy was illustrated in the Reich Entailed Farm Law (*Reichserbhofgesetz*) of 29 September 1933, drafted by Richard Darré, Reich Minister of Agriculture.

By upholding the old German custom of entailment, the Reich Government wishes to retain the peasantry as the blood spring of the German nation.

The peasant farms are to be protected from heavy indebtedness and from being split up in the course of inheritance, so that they may remain in the hands of free peasants as the inheritance of their kin. [...]

The owner of the entailed-farm is called a peasant.

Only German citizens of German blood or of that of a similar

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 436.

²²*Nazism 1919-1945*, vol. I, p. 316.

race and who are respectable are eligible to be peasants.²³

The peasantry were therefore elevated to a privileged position. Because the majority of the Volksdeutsche were small farmers and landowners, the above law drafted by Darré on 29 September 1933 found significant support among many Volksdeutsche. The National Socialists' emphasis on völkisch cooperation in the workforce as an alternative to capitalism also found support among many Volksdeutsche farmers who had already practised such a system.²⁴

With him [the Aryan] the instinct of self-preservation has reached the most noble form, because he willingly subjects his own ego to the life of the community and, if the hour should require it, he also sacrifices it. [...] Only by way of the general community is his share returned to him. Now, for instance, he no longer works directly for himself, but with his activity he joins in the frame of the community, not only for his own advantage, but for that of all.²⁵

For many of the Volksdeutsche, cooperation with other members of their community was a form of self-preservation necessary to sustain their culture. "They knew that by banding together, they could more easily overcome discrimination, whether public or official."²⁶

As illustrated above, certain elements of the National Socialist ideology were very attractive to the Volksdeutsche of Europe. By no means, however, was National Socialism embraced by all Volksdeutsche. Although many Volksdeutsche

²³Ibid., p. 319.

²⁴Lumans, p. 29.

²⁵Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 408-409.

²⁶Lumans, p. 29.

welcomed Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933, they were greatly disappointed, in the subsequent months, by Germany's inactivity concerning their situation. Germany's inactivity towards the minorities was due, in part, to Hitler's lack of a plan concerning whether the Volksdeutsche would occupy an active or passive role. Although Hitler lacked a concrete plan, he declared in December 1933 that a rebuilt German army would be able to defend the rights of the Volksdeutsche. If ethnic Germans, Hitler continued, wanted to join the German Reich, the army would deliver them to freedom:

'Ohne jedes Pathos gab er seiner Überzeugung Ausdruck, daß der begonnene Aufbau der deutschen Wehrmacht ihm die Möglichkeit geben werde, in künftigen Verhandlungen die Rechte der deutschen Volksgruppen in Europa im Sinne des Selbstbestimmungs- und Minderheitenrechtes der Völker mit größerem Nachdruck zu vertreten. [...] vor den jungen deutschen Regimentern der neuen deutschen Wehrmacht würden die zwei Millionen Gefallenen der deutschen Armee des Weltkrieges aufmarschieren und die Achtung vor ihren Taten werde dem deutschen Volk seine volle Freiheit erringen.'²⁷

Hitler, according to the above document, did not intend to assign any active role to the Volksdeutsche other than offer a pledge to preserve their German identity.

²⁸ Hitler's pledge was empty, however, since it was individual Volksdeutsche who alone could preserve their identity. Hitler's pledge in December 1933 becomes even less significant when one considers Hitler's preparedness to sacrifice the aims

²⁷Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., Hans Steinacher: Bundesleiter des VDA 1933-1937, (Boppard am Rhein, 1970) n. 10, S. XLII. (Hereafter: Steinacher)

²⁸Komjathy and Stockwell, p. 13.

and desires of the Volksdeutsche. In his second book, Hitler declared that the 200,000 Germans of the South Tyrol were not worth fighting over.

Hence it is aimless to criticize this shaping of the borders as such since ultimately every state must determine its natural borders according to its own interests and strategic purposes, it is irrelevant whether or not 200,000 Germans live within this strategically established and secured border as such, if the population of the country encompasses 42 million people, and a militarily effective adversary on this very border does not come in for consideration. It would have been wiser to have spared these 200,000 Germans any compulsion rather than to have forcibly tried to instill an outlook the result of which, according to experience, is generally without value.²⁹

Although Hitler was prepared to uphold the rights of the Volksdeutsche, he was equally willing to sacrifice their desires if his interests were served. Hitler thought Mussolini's support more valuable than the interests of 200,000 ethnic Germans who lived in the South Tyrol. Hitler's ideology conflicted, in this instance, with his desire to gain further power and influence. By the spring of 1939, Hitler had succeeded in annexing Austria, the Sudetenland, the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and Memel, by arguing in favour of the right of self-determination for the German minority (or in the case of Austria a majority) in these states. Following the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, however, Hitler was forced to resort to conquest in order to increase Germany's border; war replaced Hitler's successful manipulation of the concept of self-determination. Hitler's policy illustrated by his indecisive and inconsistent policy towards the Volksdeutsche created a confusing situation for the Volksdeutsche. Further confusion was caused by the multiple

²⁹Hitler, Hitler's Secret Book, p. 193.

organizations that dealt with the Volksdeutsche in Europe.

Chapter 3: The Major Germandom Organizations in the Reich, 1933-1934

'Herr Frick also said that the principles of National Socialism, which are directing the cultural and political life of the German nation, will constitute in the future a source of strength and of confidence for millions of Volksdeutsche (persons of German blood) living in foreign countries.'¹

The process of Nazifying the various organizations concerned with Germans abroad was not, by any means, a smooth and efficient process. The duplication of official functions, ideological differences within the various Germandom organizations and the lack of any clear direction from the Nazi leadership created an atmosphere of fierce competition and confusion that was not effectively resolved until 1938. Hitler initially tolerated the confusion within the Germandom organizations which he had helped to foster in order to retain as much power as possible. When the successes of National Socialism in Germany led to various unpleasant incidents by Volksdeutsche activists, who hoped their situation would improve due to the change of government on 30 January 1933, Hitler was forced to take action. He could not tolerate actions by members of the Volksdeutsche, just as he could not tolerate actions by Reich Germans, which could potentially complicate and upset his foreign policy aims that initially depended upon Germany's good relations with the rest of Europe. When Hitler finally did take action concerning the Gleichschaltung or co-ordination of the various Germandom

¹'National Socialism: Basic Principles, Their Application by the Nazi Party's Foreign Organization, and the Use of Germans Abroad for Nazi Aims', in Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. V, no. 3258-PS, (Washington, 1946), p. 1002. (Hereafter: Conspiracy)

organizations, it "was political expediency, not völkisch concerns, that guided [his] actions regarding the minorities."² In the first two years following Hitler's ascension to power, the Gleichschaltung of German organizations was not necessary.

The organizations in Germany that aided the German minorities, the German organizations, can be generally classified after 30 January 1933 into two major categories; non-National Socialist German organizations and National Socialist German organizations.³ Both non-National Socialist and National Socialist German organizations provided the genesis for the organization that completed the Gleichschaltung of the German organizations, Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi. It is for this reason that the major German organizations must be outlined in some detail.

The most powerful non-National Socialist German organization that existed before 1933 was the Verein für Deutschtum im Ausland or the VDA which was originally known as the Deutsche Schulverein which was founded on 23 June 1881.⁴ The main concern of the Deutsche Schulverein, as its name indicated, was the development of German schools in the various German communities outside

²Lumans, p. 33.

³Ronald M. Smelser, The Sudeten Problem 1933-1938: Volkstumspolitik and the Formulation of Nazi Foreign Policy, (Middletown, 1975), p. 14.

⁴Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 165.

the Reich. The peace settlements of the First World War and the subsequent increase of the German minority in Europe provided the impetus for the VDA, as it was called following the conclusion of the First World War, to increase its scope to include both cultural and political activities within the German minorities. By 1932, the VDA was represented in twenty-seven countries. Within these countries, the VDA had over 3200 local branches and 5500 school groups.⁵ The VDA supported itself from contributions by the Volksdeutsche along with a certain amount of aid from the Foreign Office. As with almost all major organizations in Germany, Hitler's ascension to power on 30 January 1933 brought considerable changes to the VDA.

Retired Defence Minister Otto Geßler and Admiral Seebohm, both over sixty years of age, were the elected leaders of the VDA when Hitler became chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933. In order to revitalize the leadership of the VDA, its younger members demanded a leadership election to be held in April. The leadership election, which was held on 29 April 1933, resulted in a triumph of the young members of the VDA versus the old members of the VDA. Dr. Hans Steinacher, only forty years old at the time of the election, was elected the Reichsführer of the VDA. Shortly after Steinacher's assumption of the leadership of the VDA, he changed its name from Verein für Deutschtum im Ausland to the more völkisch sounding, in a move that was designed to appease the National

⁵Ibid., p. 165.

Socialists, Volksbund für Deutschtum im Ausland. Although Steinacher's leadership over the VDA and his decision to give the VDA a more völkisch sounding name might appear conciliatory to the National Socialists, Steinacher was by no means a Nazi or Nazi sympathizer. Although some similarities did exist between the VDA and the National Socialists, the differences that separated the two groups far outweighed any similarities.

The main difference between the Nazi ideology and the VDA's ideology regarding the German minority was a simple matter of perception. The National Socialists "emphasized the Reich or core state (*Kernstaat*), rather than the individual ethnic groups. In questions of policy, the Reich and its goals had priority; ethnic Germans were significant primarily in terms of their usefulness in the service of the core state."⁶ Steinacher's and the VDA's main goal was the welfare of the ethnic Germans which de-emphasized the core state; "the Reich, as the stronghold of Germandom, was important mainly in that it was in a position to serve German groups by lending its strength and influence to ethnic communities abroad which enjoyed a much less secure position."⁷ The needs of the Volksdeutsche and their independent development were more important for Steinacher and the VDA than the needs of the Reich. Despite these significant differences between the VDA and the National Socialists, the VDA wielded more influence than any of the National

⁶Smelser, pp. 17-18.

⁷Smelser, p. 18.

Socialist Germandom institutions in the field of Germandom from 1933 until March 1935. The VDA's influence in the field of Germandom was due to the support it received from the deputy Führer Rudolf Hess who guaranteed the independence of the VDA against any encroachments by National Socialists. Steinacher and the VDA's independence from official Nazi connections was officially sanctioned by Hess in a letter to Steinacher dated 2 June 1933.

Ich weiß auch darüber hinaus sehr wohl, daß die Wirkungsmöglichkeit des Verbandes um so größer ist, je mehr er sich nach wie vor freizuhalten versteht von Einflüssen des offiziellen Deutschland, gleichgültig, ob dieses sich in Regierungen oder in Parteigegebenen verkörpert, und sei es selbst in einer Bewegung, die im Grunde so wenig Partei im normalen Sinne ist wie die nationalsozialistische.⁸

Hess then assured Steinacher that Hitler also shared this opinion. Rudolf Hess's support of the VDA was significant since he was in charge of all matters concerning Germandom abroad.

1) All questions regarding the German element beyond the borders (*Grenzdeutsche* and *Auslandsdeutsche*) and questions regarding the strengthening and unity of the whole German community, as well as all related matters within the Reich, are subject to my jurisdiction and supervision.⁹

Steinacher referred to Hess's letter of 2 June 1933 as the Magna Carta of the

⁸Neue Wege- erste Erfolge des VDA, Steinacher, no. 2, p. 16.

⁹Record of a Decision by the Deputy of the Führer, 27 October 1933, in Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series C, vol. II, no. 31, (London, 1959), p. 49. (Hereafter: D.G.F.P.)

VDA.¹⁰ Unfortunately for Steinacher, the liberties Hess granted to the VDA were not nearly as far reaching nor as long lasting as the liberties granted to the English people by King John at Runnimeade in June 1215. The powers granted to the VDA were reinforced at an interdepartmental conference attended by the members of the Volksdeutscher Rat or VR, a non-National Socialist Germandom organization that will be described in full in the next later paragraph, and by the inter-ministerial committee concerned with nationality and the minorities questions on 14 December 1933. "The VDA should remain free of state and party in the future, too, in order to continue fulfilling certain tasks unhampered."¹¹

The Volksdeutsche Rat or VR, a newly created non-National Socialist Germandom organization, evolved following a series of conversations in September 1933 between Dr. Steinacher, the university professor and noted geopolitician Karl Haushofer and his son Albrecht and Dr. Robert Ernst, the Director of the Deutscher Schutzbund which was an umbrella organization of the VDA founded in 1919. The meeting concerned the reorganization of the Deutsches Auslandinstitut or DAI, a Germandom organization which had its main office in Stuttgart. The DAI "fostered cultural contacts between the Reich and ethnic German groups."¹² It was decided by Steinacher, the Haushofers and Ernst at these conversations in September 1933

¹⁰Neue Wege- erste Erfolge des VDA, Steinacher, no. 2, p. 16.

¹¹The Foreign Ministry to Various Government Departments, 14 December 1933, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 140, p. 257.

¹²Smelser, op. cit., p. 23.

that a new Germandom organization should be created that would be empowered to coordinate all the Germandom organizations in the Reich. In order to achieve this goal, Rudolf Hess's support and influence were necessary. On 7 September 1933, Albrecht Haushofer wrote to Hess in an attempt to convince him that the Germandom organizations should be centralized. Haushofer also attempted to convince Hess that he should further assert his control over all Germandom work. "Und ich kann nur nochmals meine Münchener Bitte wiederholen: es ist dringend notwendig, daß Sie selbst auf diesem Gebiet [Germandom work] die oberste Kontrolle übernehmen."¹³ The VR was a non-National Socialist Germandom organization that received its official sanction by Rudolf Hess on 27 October 1933.

2) As a deliberative and executive organ, I have called together the Volksdeutsche Council [VR] which is headed by Dr. [Karl] Haushofer, University Professor, Munich.

3) Dr. Steinacher, Berlin, has primary responsibility for representing the Volksdeutsche Council abroad.

4) The Volksdeutsche Council does not appear publicly.¹⁴

Hess's decision to create the VR on 27 October demonstrated his willingness to centralize the Germandom organizations within the Reich. That Hess would create a new organization staffed by non-National Socialist Germandom workers instead of further empowering the VDA demonstrated the weakness of the VDA's 'Magna

¹³Albrecht Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 7 September 1933, in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen ed., Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk., Bd. II, (Boppard am Rhein, 1979), no. 78, p. 145. (Hereafter: Haushofer)

¹⁴Record of a Decision by the Deputy of the Führer, 27 October 1933, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 31, p. 49.

Carta' of 2 June 1933.

The professional requirements for the members of the VR were described during an interdepartmental meeting between the VR and the inter-ministerial committee for nationality and minorities questions on 14 December 1933. As in the case of the VDA, it was desirable that the members of the VR not belong to the National Socialist party.

The following points of view had been decisive in choosing the members of the Volksdeutsch Council: The only persons to be considered as members of the Council were such as 1) had been active in volksdeutsch work for a long time, 2) had a confidential relationship with one another, and 3) have no official character and have not been active in a prominent position in the National Socialist party.¹⁵

Although the VR was staffed mostly by members of the VDA, one could argue that the VR's position was even more privileged than the VDA's due to Hess's close relationship with Professor Karl Haushofer. Hess's relationship with Karl Haushofer was why a new non-National Socialist Germandom organization was created. Hess could easily have centralized the Germandom organizations under Steinacher and the VDA rather than creating the VR.

Dr. Stieve, the Director of Department VI (the Cultural Policy Department) in the Foreign Ministry, described on 11 November 1933 a conversation that occurred between the Foreign Minister Constantin von Neurath and Hess concerning the creation of the VR. The Foreign Ministry was prepared to allow the

¹⁵The Foreign Ministry to Various Government Departments, 20 December 1933, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 140, p. 256.

VR to express its ideas before the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Nationality and Minorities Questions although the Reich government would retain the ultimate authority in all questions relating to the Volksdeutsche and minorities questions.

The creation of the Volksdeutsche Council [VR] is to be welcomed, because it represents a valuable instrument for unifying activities concerning the German nationality, especially in the interest of German national groups abroad. But it must be fully understood that the discussions requested by the Volksdeutsche Council can be conducted only on the following basis:

The volksdeutsch work and the minorities question are very closely linked with Germany's foreign policy in general. The ministries concerned will be glad to receive from the Volksdeutsch Council and to examine any suggestion relating to the furtherance of German nationality work. But the ultimate decision in all volksdeutsch and minorities questions must rest with the Reich Government, and specifically with the Foreign Ministry which is responsible for foreign policy.¹⁶

Although according to the above memorandum the VR was only an advisory body, the VR enjoyed certain powers and privileges due to its links to Hess. Certain powers of the VR are described in a Foreign Ministry Memorandum on 20 December 1933. The memorandum of 20 December 1933 outlined the conference of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Nationality and Minorities Questions and members of the VR of 14 December 1933. The VR's actual powers in the field of Germanism went far beyond mere advice.

Dr. Steinacher stated at the beginning that two principles had been decisive in the establishment of the Volksdeutsch Council: 1) the necessity for a unified authoritative direction in all volksdeutsch questions, 2) the incorporation at the proper level of the volksdeutsch

¹⁶Memorandum by the Director of Department VI, 11 November 1933, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 60, p. 107.

policy into all-German (*gesamtdeutsche*) [sic.] policy. [...]

The Deputy of the Führer had informed the ministries concerned that all nonofficial organizations active in volksdeutsch questions were placed under Herr Rudolf Hess and the Volksdeutsch Council. Accordingly the Gaue of the National Socialist party, the Hitler Youth, the student organizations, etc., must no longer engage in any independent work in volksdeutsch questions; the offices for border regions (*Grenzlandämter*) [sic.] should be dissolved at once. The cooperation of the Volksdeutsch Council with the separate organizations would be regulated by the Deputy of the Führer.¹⁷

The VR also "laid claim to the Germandom funds administered by the Foreign Office and the Finance Ministry."¹⁸ The VR, therefore, enjoyed exclusive rights over both cultural and financial matters concerning the Volksdeutsche. It also possessed powers over those Nazi organizations which were unofficially active in the area of Germandom work.

One National Socialist Germandom organization that rivalled the VR and the VDA was the Außenpolitische Amt der NSDAP or the APA¹⁹ which was led since 1 April 1933 by Hitler's main ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg unsuccessfully attempted to assume the leadership of the VDA on behalf of the National Socialist party in the elections of 29 April 1933. Rosenberg's strong influence among the upper echelons of the National Socialist leadership did not lead

¹⁷The Foreign Ministry to Various Government Departments, 20 December 1933, in *D.G.F.P.*, Series C, vol. II, no. 140, pp. 255-256.

¹⁸Smelser, p. 23.

¹⁹For a good summary of the APA, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Außenpolitik*, pp. 45-89.

to effective influence in the field of Germandom. A much more serious threat to the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations, therefore, was the Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP or the AO.

The Auslands-Abteilung, as the Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP (AO) was originally called, was founded in Hamburg on 28 April 1931. Gregor Strasser, the Reich Organization Chief, subordinated the Auslands-Abteilung to his office and named Dr. Hans Nieland as the leader of the Auslands-Abteilung. The Auslands-Abteilung was created in order to organize and guide the Nazi party's foreign members.²⁰ On 21 November 1932, Strasser upgraded the Auslands-Abteilung to the status of a district organization or a Gau. Nieland, as leader of the newly named Gau Ausland was therefore promoted to the rank of a Gauleiter. When Strasser suddenly resigned his office, however, on 8 December 1932, Nieland's position as leader of the Gau Ausland was seriously weakened.²¹ On 15 March 1933, Strasser's successor, Dr. Robert Ley, fired Nieland from his position as leader of the Gau Ausland. The official explanation Ley offered concerning Nieland's dismissal was that Nieland's new position as police president of Hamburg, given to him two weeks previously, would take too much of his time. Nieland's link to Strasser was not, however, the sole reason for his fall from grace. The ineffectual links between Germany and the Nazi groups abroad that were organized by Nieland

²⁰McKale, p. 19.

²¹Ibid., p. 39.

demonstrated the need to change the leadership of the Gau Ausland. Ley provisionally named Robert Schmeer, a close friend of his, as Nielands replacement. The situation surrounding the Gau Ausland was further complicated when Ley decided to again rename the Gau Ausland the Abteilung für Deutsche im Ausland. The newly named Abteilung für Deutsche im Ausland moved its headquarters from Hamburg to Munich. The privileged Gau status was therefore removed. It was during this confusing situation caused by the many changes to the Gau Ausland that Ernst Bohle came to the foreground of Germandom activities.

Ernst Bohle was born in England on 28 July 1903 where he lived until 1906 when his parents moved to South Africa. In 1919, Bohle left South Africa in order to attend university in Germany where he studied economics and political science at the Universities of Cologne and Berlin. In 1923, Bohle graduated with a degree in commerce. He worked in several export firms before purchasing his own automobile accessories shop in 1930.²² Because of his upbringing abroad, Bohle was greatly interested in the field of Germandom. Bohle "became a volunteer assistant of the Auslands-Organisation [sic.] in December 1931 and was taken into the [Nazi] Party on 1 March 1932."²³ Following Dr. Nieland's dismissal on 15 March 1933 as leader of the Auslands Abteilung, a power vacuum formed which

²²McKale, p. 46.

²³Bohle's affidavit, quoted in Trial of Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, vol. X, Proceedings: 25 March 1946- 6 April 1946, (Nuremberg, 1947), p. 12. (Hereafter: I.M.T.)

both Ley and Rosenberg tried to fill. It was Rudolf Hess and his authority over all Germans abroad that saved the Abteilung from being absorbed by either Ley or Rosenberg. Bohle asked to meet with Hess in March following Nieland's dismissal in order to discuss the future of the Abteilung für Deutsche im Ausland. At this meeting, Bohle stressed the dangers of dissolving the Abteilung since foreign Germans would then organize themselves and act independently of Germany. "It would be better, he suggested, to erect a disciplined organization controlled by the party than to permit groups in other countries to function on their own."²⁴ Hess was obviously impressed with Bohle's performance at the meeting held between the two men in March because on 8 May 1933 Hess named Bohle the new leader of the Abteilung für Deutsche im Ausland. "'On account of my experience and my connections abroad- I was born in England and raised in South Africa- I was charged with the leadership of the Auslands-Organisation [sic].'"²⁵ Bohle described the functions of the Abteilung at length during his trial at Nuremberg:

2. The purpose of the Auslands-Organisation [sic.] was, upon the assumption of power, to hold together in an organized way the approximately 3300 Party members living outside the boundaries of Germany at the time of the seizure of power. Further, through it Germans abroad, who could have only a vague idea of the political happenings at home, were to be taught the philosophy and the political program of the new state.

3. Only German nationals could become members of the Party. The acceptance of foreigners or former Germans who had acquired citizenship in another state was strictly prohibited.

²⁴McKale, p. 47.

²⁵Bohle's affidavit, quoted in I.M.T., vol. X, p. 12.

4. The guiding principle of the Auslands-Organisation of the Party concerning its attitude to foreign countries was found on the Ausland pass of every German national who was a member of the Party in the following passage: 'Observe the laws of the country whose guest you are. Let the citizens of the country in which you stay take care of their internal politics; do not interfere in these matters, not even by way of conversation.'²⁶

Bohle quickly gained considerable influence and authority as the leader of the Abteilung. On 3 October 1933, Hess elevated the status of the Abteilung once again; it was elevated to the position of a Hauptabteilung der Reichsleitung (a head department of the NSDAP's national leadership) and placed under the authority of Hess.²⁷ Interestingly, two major organizations that fought for dominance in the field of Germandom, the National Socialist AO and the non-National Socialist VR, were both under the patronage of the same man, Rudolf Hess. The conflict of interests, however, between the Nazi and non-Nazi Germandom organizations would eventually have to be fought out. It was unlikely, however, that the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations would be allowed to continue; the future of the VDA and the VR, therefore, looked bleak.

The Abteilung was authorized by Hess as the only party office authorized to deal with the German National Socialist organizations abroad. Bohle's position as head of the Abteilung was further strengthened by Hess's decision to appoint him to the position of Gauleiter on 17 February 1934. It was also on this date that

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁷Smelser, p. 27.

Hess permanently changed the name of the *Abteilung für Deutsche im Ausland* to *Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP* or the AO. Bohle's position was further enhanced following the promulgation of the Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State on 1 December 1933. "1. After the victory of the National Socialist revolution, the National Socialist German Workers' Party is the bearer of the concept of the German State and is inseparably linked with the State. It is a corporation under public law."²⁸ The Nazi party, following the promulgation of the law, was the only legitimate political authority in Germany. The 'Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State' gave Bohle and other National Socialist organizations considerable powers. "Up until this time, the *Abteilung* represented only the party abroad; now, under the new rubric of *Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP* (AO) [and due to the Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State of 1 December 1933], it was to represent the interests of the entire National Socialist state among Germandom abroad- a considerably larger task."²⁹ Bohle, however, was not satisfied with his greatly increased powers; he decided to claim authority over all Volksdeutsche. He was directly challenging the non-National Socialist VDA and VR. The strengthened position of the AO did not, however, immediately spell the end for the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations; the fierce struggles between the traditionalist and National Socialist Germandom organizations would continue for

²⁸Nazism 1919-1945, vol. I, p. 233.

²⁹Smelser, p. 27.

five years. Although the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations did not occur until July 1938, the increasing powers of the National Socialist Germandom organizations created a situation that would invariably lead to their ascendancy over the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations.

Chapter 4: The Genesis of the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom Organizations

What is obviously damaging to the safeguarding of the nation must be removed. If an institution proves unfitted to undertake this task, then another institution must undertake this task and carry it out. All of us, my comrades, and especially you who hold positions of leadership in the State and the Movement, will not be judged by your observance of forms [...] but by your successful realization of our programme, i.e. by the measure in which you defend our *völkisch* life.¹

Although Bohle and the AO were gaining power and influence, the non-National Socialist VDA and VR still enjoyed a privileged position. The independent position enjoyed by the VDA and the VR was increased in the early months of 1934. Rudolf Hess decreed on 13 March 1934 that the VR was given the sole authority over the Sudeten Germans, the single largest Volksdeutsche group in Europe; "Dr. Steinacher stated that the Deputy of the Führer, Reich Minister Hess, taking account of this situation, had by a decision of March 13, 1934, directed that sole responsibility for handling Sudeten German questions lay with the Volksdeutsche Council."² On 16 March Steinacher and Gerhard Köpke, Director of Department II of the Foreign Ministry which was concerned with western, southern and south-eastern Europe, further decided that no new National Socialist political organizations should be established in Czechoslovakia. "It was not therefore feasible to set up in Germany a National Socialist militant organization for

¹Speech made by Adolf Hitler at the Nuremberg Party Rally on 15 September 1935, in, Nazism: 1919-1945, vol. I, p. 237.

²Minute by an Official of Department VI, 19 March 1934, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 330, p. 617.

the Sudeten Germans analogous to the case of Austria."³ Following Hess's decision on 13 March 1934 to empower the VR with sole authority over the Sudeten Germans, he had Steinacher inform the Foreign Ministry of this new development.

A series of meetings were held on 27-28 March 1934 between Steinacher and the Foreign Ministry. Present at the meetings were Dr. Steinacher, Gerhard Köpke, the Director of Department II of the Foreign Ministry, Walter Koch, the German Minister in Czechoslovakia, Cecil von Renthe-Fink, the Deputy Director of Department II, Hermann Hüffer, the counsellor of Legation, and Conrad Roediger, the Senior Counsellor in Department VI. It was agreed at this meeting that the interests of the German communities in Czechoslovakia "must on no account be disturbed by renewed interference in Sudeten German affairs by unauthorized groups, and in particular [...] the new national movement that now was slowly taking shape among the Sudeten Germans after the complete smashing of National Socialism [which culminated with the dissolution of the Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (DNSAP) and the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (DAP) on 28 September 1933, would have to ...] develop independently, without any noticeable intervention by Reich German organizations."⁴ It was further concluded that the VR and the Foreign Office would maintain close ties while they

³Ibid., p. 617.

⁴Memorandum by an Official of Department II, 28 March 1934, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. II, no. 361, p. 682.

pursued the policy of the Reich Government concerning the Volksdeutsche. The pre-eminence of the non-National Socialist VR by March 1934 did not, however, signify the end of Ernst Bohle and the AO.

On 14 February 1934, Bohle placed all German teachers abroad under his authority and under the authority of the Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund or NSLB.⁵ In 1934, there were one thousand and nineteen German schools abroad "that were financially supported by the German government (with many more that were not); the total enrolment at all the schools exceeded 82,000 students."⁶ This large student body at these schools consisted not exclusively of Reich Germans or even Volksdeutsche, but also included many students who were native to the countries in which the schools were located. It was for this reason that the AO and the NSLB felt it necessary to penetrate the German schools abroad. Bohle's influence was further extended in February 1934 following Hess's decision to permit him to open an office in the Foreign Ministry. Bohle's influence in the Wilhelmstraße, however, was not significant since he was not an official member of the Foreign Ministry. "Dennoch blieb der Einfluß der AO auf das Amt auch weiterhin gering. Immerhin hatte diese Parteidienststelle bereits 'einen Fuß in der Tür.'"⁷ Bohle's increased influence made the non-National Socialist Germandom

⁵Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 200.

⁶McKale, p. 61.

⁷Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 469.

workers understandably uncomfortable. When Bohle hinted that the AO would eventually organize all Germans abroad, both the Reichsdeutsche and the Volksdeutsche, the dispute between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist Germandom organizations was brought into the foreground.

Bohle's personal power and the influence of the AO did not, however, emanate through the AO's control of the German schools abroad nor through Bohle's new office in the Foreign Ministry; it depended upon the favour of the Deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess. Despite Bohle's rising fortunes, Karl Haushofer's influence upon Hess secured the continued existence of the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations. As long as Haushofer's influence over Hess continued, Bohle would never be able to gain absolute authority over the Germandom organizations. Karl and Albrecht Haushofer's attitudes towards Bohle and the increased influence of the AO are demonstrated in their correspondence. On 22 June 1934, Albrecht wrote to his father of the dangers faced by the VR due to the ever increasing powers of Bohle and the AO. "Die Abwehr von Bohle- Anspruch und Person- ist eine Kabinettsfrage für den Volksdeutschen Rat, deren Schärfe Du unserem hohen Protektor [Hess] nicht ersparen kannst."⁸ On 23 June 1934, Albrecht again vehemently attacked Bohle in another letter to his father. He stated that Hess must have understood the dangers posed to the VR by Bohle's expansions. He continued by declaring that Bohle "understands absolutely nothing

⁸Albrecht Haushofer to Karl Haushofer, 23 June 1934, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 89, p. 162.

about the deeper meaning of the distinction between reichsdeutsch and volksdeutsch!"⁹ Although Karl Haushofer's attacks against Bohle were less vehement than his son's, his dislike of Bohle's increased powers and the increased powers of the AO was clear. He outlined the differences between the VR and the AO in a memorandum to Rudolf Hess on 24 July 1934 entitled 'Daseinsfrage des Volksdeutschen Rates'. Haushofer wrote that in order to gain dominance over the AO, the VR would have to overcome the valuable influence the AO possessed over the Reichsdeutsche. It would also have to encroach upon the work of the VDA in foreign countries. "Dafür geben die Zustände des Grenz- und Auslanddeutschtums vor dem Inslebensreten des VR mit ihrem Kampf aller gegen Alle einen zu deutlichen Beweis."¹⁰

Haushofer's memorandum to Hess of 24 July 1934 seemed to have little influence upon Hess who was willing to allow the competition that arose between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German organizations to continue. On 25 July 1934, however, Hess decided to promulgate a compromise solution between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German organizations. The AO was given precedence in those areas where Germans of Reich citizenship were in the majority. Otherwise, the VDA would maintain their

⁹Smelser, p. 78.

¹⁰Denkschrift Karl Haushofers, 24 July 1934, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 94, p. 170.

influence in those areas where the Volksdeutsche were in the majority.¹¹ Many differences were left unresolved, however, between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German organizations.

On 15 August 1934, Albrecht Haushofer attempted to end the struggle between the German organizations when he suggested to his father that they ask Hess for an official ukase. "Als die Differenzen zwischen Bohle und dem VR zunahmen, und Hess sich nicht zu einer Entscheidung aufrufen konnte- während Hitler sich völlig im Hintergrund hielt und seine Intentionen nicht erkennen ließ-, schlug A. Haushofer seinem Vater vor, den Stellvertreter des Führers um einen 'Ukas' zu bitten, der dieses leidige Problem endlich löse."¹² On 17 September 1934, Hess finally made a decision regarding the dispute between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German organizations concerning their respective spheres of influence. Hess forbade the AO from interfering in affairs concerning the Volksdeutsche which therefore remained within the sphere of the VDA. The VDA, however, could not encroach upon the AO's influence over the Reich Germans abroad.¹³ Hess's solution was by no means revolutionary since it essentially reinforced his decision of 25 July 1934. The powers of the AO and the VDA were not extended; they were merely reiterated.

¹¹Smelser, p. 78.

¹²Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, pp. 202-203.

¹³Smelser, p. 78.

Although Hess's support for the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations was beginning to wane, the VDA continued to enjoy the support of several prominent Nazis. Dr. Friedrich Stieve, the Director of Department VI, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, the Reich Interior Minister and Bernhard Rust, the Reich Minister for Science, Pedagogy and Popular Education all supported the VDA's independent position. The VDA also found support from former Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen, Generals von Blomberg, von Reichenau and von Brauchitsch, Admiral Raeder and finally, Hermann Göring from 1933 until 1935.¹⁴ The most important and significant ally, however, for the non-National Socialist Germandom workers against Bohle and the AO was none of the important personalities mentioned above. The most important ally for the non-National Socialist Germandom workers was Heinrich Kersken who was known as the 'Rauhbein der SA vom Niederrhein', the SA roughneck from the lower Rhine. He was Rudolf Hess's personal representative in the VR. On 27 February 1934, Kersken wrote a letter to Bohle informing him that the AO had no business involving itself in Volksdeutsche affairs: "Doch wies Kersken derartige Ansprüche sofort mit der Bemerkung zurück, die AO habe nichts mit volkspolitischen Arbeiten zu tun, dafür sei der VDA zuständig, der parteioffiziell gestützt werde und in Übersee den Auftrag erhalten habe, deutsche Schulen zu unterhalten und die Auslandsdeutschen (Volksdeutschen) zu betreuen."¹⁵

¹⁴Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 200.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 202.

Despite the powerful support the non-National Socialist German organizations enjoyed, their influence was not by any means secure. The competition for influence over the Volksdeutsche between the non-National Socialist German organizations and the AO in foreign countries was mirrored by the competition for influence in Germany between the non-National Socialist youth organizations and the Hitlerjugend (HJ) or the Hitler Youth.

The HJ attempted to completely overshadow the VDA's youth organizations, or the VDA-Jugend, in Germany. At the time of Hitler's ascension to power on 30 January 1933, the HJ had a membership of only 55,365 persons or roughly one percent of the five to six million youths organized in various organizations. By the end of 1933, however, the HJ enjoyed a membership of 568,288 or just over ten times its membership of January 1933.¹⁶ Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the HJ, had his powers extended on 17 June 1933 following his appointment as Youth Leader of the German Reich. Since he was authorized to supervise all youth activities, he was directly under the authority of the Reich Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick. Schirach's authority over all youth activities made for severe competition between the VDA-Jugend and the HJ. This competition necessitated the agreement which was promulgated on 6 May 1933.

Between the Hitler Youth and the VDA, the following fundamental arrangement has been agreed upon.

1) With a complete respect for the important racial-political task the Hitler Youth recommends to its members membership in

¹⁶Nazism 1919-1945, vol I, pp. 417-418.

collaboration with the VDA.

2) The work of the VDA group continues in its previous forms. The VDA, however, discontinues its military and physical training.

3) The school groups of the VDA (racial-German workcells) assist the Hitler Youth in their work.

4) The VDA group chiefs work consequently in close contact with the Hitler Youth leaders and participate with their groups in the events of the Hitler Youth, as conversely the Hitler Youth can also take part in the racial-German fetes of the VDA.

5) As a visible sign of his solidarity with the Hitler Youth the VDA member wears a VDA armband with the Swastika.

6) Solicitor Nabersberg of the NSDAP's National Youth Office becomes a member of the VDA's Council of Leaders. Dr. H. Schoeneich of the VDA becomes a member of the Council of Leaders in the Reich's Board of German Youth Societies. The same reciprocal representation is also to be established in the provincial boards.¹⁷

The HJ was therefore authorized to control the military, political and educational aspects of the youth work while the VDA was authorized only to educate German youths in the field of Germandom. The agreement favoured, not surprisingly, the HJ over the VDA-Jugend. On 18 December 1933, the VDA-Jugend suffered another setback when Hess decided to change its' name to the less threatening sounding VDA-Schulgruppen. Hess's decree of 18 December 1933 further weakened the VDA-Schulgruppen by its stipulation that members of the VDA-Schulgruppen should never compose more than twenty percent of the pupils in any one school.¹⁸ The influence of the HJ over the VDA-Schulgruppen steadily increased through 1934. Although Hess's memorandum of 27 October 1933

¹⁷Agreement with the National Office of the Hitler Youth, 6 May 1933, in Conspiracy, vol VII, no. L-360, p. 1108.

¹⁸Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 204.

ended the independent activities of the HJ in the field of Germandom,¹⁹ the HJ still enjoyed a degree of influence in the field of Germandom. Schirach decided to join forces with Ernst Bohle in order to make headway against the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations. Schirach, however, "shared Bohle's ideas on Germandom abroad, seeing no distinction between Reich and ethnic Germans as far as National Socialism was concerned."²⁰ When his request that the VDA-Schulgruppen be dissolved entirely in June 1934 was denied, he declared open war against the VDA.²¹ Despite Schirach's temporary defeat in June 1934, the alliance between Schirach and Bohle demonstrated that certain prominent National Socialists were beginning to work together in order to remove the non-National Socialist influence in the field of Germandom. The VDA's loss of influence was mirrored by the decreasing influence of the VR.

On 15 October 1934, Rudolf Hess presented the VR with its most serious setback to date. Hess decided to relieve Heinrich Kersken as his personal representative on the VR. As illustrated above, Kersken was an invaluable ally for the non-National Socialist Germandom workers against the National Socialists who were steadily gaining influence in the field of Germandom. Kersken's success in mediating disputes between the rival organizations had, however, a negative effect

¹⁹Look n. 18 in Chapter 3.

²⁰Smelser, p. 80.

²¹Ibid., p. 80-81.

upon his position as Hess's personal representative. Kersken did not evidently understand that he would have to accumulate and maintain friends from within the Nazi leadership in order to maintain his position. Kersken's numerous personal shortcomings also did not help his weakening situation. "Seine Sturheit, seine cholerische Natur, sein mangelndes diplomatisches Verhandlungsgeschick und sein Hang zum Alkohol hatten sich herumgesprochen."²² To the horror of the non-National Socialist German workers, Kersken's successor as Hess's official expert on all questions of Germans living abroad was none other than Ernst Bohle. At the same time, Hess appointed both Bohle and Joachim von Ribbentrop, who had recently been named 'Plenipotentiary for Foreign Policy Questions on the Staff of the Führer's Deputy', to the membership of the VR. Bohle chose his colleague Wolfgang Graf Yorck von Wartenburg to represent him in the VR while Ribbentrop chose Dr. Wilhelm Kügler to represent him on the VR. Steinacher aptly described the events of 15 October 1934 as "eine offensichtliche Niederlage."²³ Albrecht Haushofer wrote to his father on 16 October 1934 informing him of the personnel changes Hess effected in the VR:

Die Einfügung von Ribbentrop und Bohle muß wegen sonst unabsehbarer äußerer Schadenswirkungen strengst vertraulich bleiben, darf z.B. weder in den unteren Dienststellen der Auslandsorganisation noch in denen des VDA bekanntwerden. Jeder Versuch, lokalen Größen der Auslandsorganisation von der Art des Konsuls Bernard

²²Jacobsen, Außenpolitik. pp. 213-214.

²³Der 15. Oktober und seine Folgen, in Steinacher, no. 31, p. 165.

[Bromberg: he was the AO's Landesvertrauensmann in Poland] draußen in den Volksgruppen unmittelbaren Einfluß einzuräumen, muß abgewehrt werden. Die Schadenswirkungen im Falle des Gegenteils wären unabsehbar.²⁴

Despite the understandable reservations Steinacher and Haushofer felt towards Hess's new appointments to the staff of the VR, the changes effected on 15 October 1934 did not immediately signify the end of the VR. When the VR met on 22 October 1934, Bohle did not say a word; the showdown between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German organizations was not yet at hand.²⁵ Rudolf Hess even wrote to Karl Haushofer on 23 October 1934 thanking him for not effecting a showdown between him and Bohle at the meeting on 22 October. He also thanked Haushofer for not jumping to conclusions concerning the new additions to the VR.

Ich bin Dir herzlich dankbar, daß Du meiner Bitte, vorerst keine Konsequenzen zu ziehen, nachgekommen bist. Ich glaube, daß bei der gleichen Bereitschaft wie bisher, sich über alle Widerlichkeiten beiderseits hinwegzusetzen, die Sache auch weiterhin gut gehen wird. Vor allem denke ich, daß Du hinsichtlich Bohles Mitwirken Dein Urteil bald berichtigen kannst.²⁶

Karl Haushofer never really had a chance to change his opinion of Bohle as desired by Hess due to the events of early 1935.

²⁴Albrecht Haushofer to Karl Haushofer, 16 October 1934, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 96, p. 173.

²⁵Smelser, p. 105.

²⁶Rudolf Hess to Karl Haushofer, 23 October 1934, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 98, p. 177.

The inactivity of the National Socialists immediately following their entry into the VR quickly changed in the new year. Bohle's representative, Wartenburg, soon made all discussions between the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German workers impossible.²⁷ On 18 January 1935, Albrecht Haushofer wrote to his father asking him to convince Hess to resist Bohle. "'Our superior [Hess] will not get peace either, unless he puts Bohle in his place.'"²⁸ Albrecht Haushofer's desire that Hess reprimand Bohle did not materialize. Instead, Hess decided to virtually dismantle the VR following a meeting called by Bohle on 1 February 1935. At this meeting Bohle demanded that the VR support not only the Deutsche Vereinigung, the recognized German organization in Poland, but also the Jungdeutschen, which was a radical National Socialist organization that had for a long time enjoyed the support of the AO.²⁹ Bohle's demand essentially undermined the function of the VR and ran counter to the philosophy of the non-National Socialist German workers. If two rival groups within a German community abroad were supported, inner strife would necessarily result. Inner strife within the German communities abroad would undermine the unity of the various ethnic groups; this would have run contrary to the non-National Socialist German worker's desire to preserve as much unity as possible within the various

²⁷Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 218.

²⁸James Douglas-Hamilton, The Truth about Rudolf Hess, (London, 1993), p. 48.

²⁹Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 218.

Volksdeutsche communities. Inner strife within the German communities abroad also ran contrary to the philosophy of the non-National Socialist German workers who desired that any differences within the Volksdeutsche should be worked out amongst themselves.

On 2 February 1935, Steinacher described the dangers that would result if two rival German organizations were both recognized and supported.

Der Zwiespalt innerhalb der deutschen Volksgruppe wird damit erneut vertieft. Die Autorität der Deutschen Vereinigung wird auf das äußerste geschwächt. Die Propaganda der Jungdeutschen Partei wird sich rücksichtslos verschärfen. Die Zerreißung der Volksgruppe wird damit in einem Augenblick größer, in dem immer offensichtlicher wird, daß gerade die polnische Seite die Zerreißung wünscht und ihrerseits bemüht ist, die einzelnen Gruppen gegeneinander auszuspielen.³⁰

The Foreign Minister, Constantin Freiherr von Neurath, shared Steinacher's negative opinion concerning the support and recognition of two rival German organizations in Poland. On 29 April 1935, well after the episode of 1 February 1935 had lost its significance, Neurath wrote a letter to Hess informing him of his displeasure concerning Wartenburg's and Bohle's suggestion that both the Deutsche Vereinigung and the Jungdeutschen be supported by the VR in Poland. His criticisms mirrored those by Steinacher and the non-National Socialist German workers.

I would have doubted the accuracy of this information had it not reached the Foreign Ministry in a definite form from various independent sources. [...]

³⁰Das Ende des VR, 2 February 1935, in Steinacher, no. 64, p. 268.

Desirable as a unification of the German national community in Poland would be from an all-German point of view, it must for the time being be left to the German national community in Poland to bring this about by itself. [...]

It is impossible not to recognize that the increasing tendency among certain offices within the Reich to intervene in the affairs of minorities has been paralleled by a marked increase in the nervousness and watchfulness of the so-called 'Minorities States' in respect of any indication that the German minorities are becoming dependent upon the German Reich.³¹

Neurath continued by stressing that the principle of blood brotherhood that existed between the German Reich and the Volksdeutsche would lead to a deterioration of diplomatic relations between Germany and any country that employed oppressive measures against the German minority residing there. Interestingly, Neurath's next argument against Germany's interference in the affairs of the Volksdeutsche in Poland departed completely from the arguments employed by the non-National Socialist German workers. He declared that "[i]n the next few years, when we shall have to make our way against many States, some linked together in opposition to us, we shall have to avoid encumbering ourselves with such burdens. Instead we must, on our side, do all we can to remove any unnecessary sources of friction and impediments."³² Neurath then outlined in the most general terms Germany's desire to follow an aggressive and, therefore, expansionist foreign policy. He then reiterated Hitler's and the National Socialists view that Germany would only

³¹Foreign Minister Neurath to Reich Minister Hess, 17 April 1935, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. IV, no. 35, p. 63.

³²Foreign Minister Neurath to Reich Minister Hess, 17 April 1935, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. IV, no. 35, p. 64.

support the claims and complaints of the various Volksdeutsche groups if it suited her general policy for each country. Aid to the Volksdeutsche depended solely, therefore, upon convenience and not ideology. According to Neurath, it was not convenient for Germany to disturb diplomatic relations over the aims of the Volksdeutsche in Poland.

Especially in the case of Poland, any attempt by official Party offices within the Reich to influence the German minority could easily lead to an unnecessary and undesirable deterioration in our relations with Poland, where good relations are important to us.

Therefore, if the information reaching me is correct and such a purpose really exists, I am compelled urgently to request that no attempt be made to influence the domestic affairs of the German minority in Poland by means of negotiations or discussions, and that the official Party offices refrain from any similar activities in respect of all German national groups abroad until further notice.³³

Although Neurath's arguments against pursuing an active policy towards the German minority in Poland support many of the claims made by the non-National Socialist German workers, his argument that the claims and complaints of the Volksdeutsche should only be supported if they coincided with Germany's foreign policy aims supported the National Socialist conception of German work. It illustrated that Neurath did not ideologically support the Volksdeutsche. Despite the vehemence of Neurath's attack against Bohle's and Wartenburg's policy, Hess was not likely swayed by the arguments that were presented to him roughly three months after that fateful meeting of the VR on 1 February 1935. Another reason why Hess would not have been swayed by Neurath's arguments is because by 17

³³Ibid., p. 64.

April 1935, the VR had virtually ceased to exist as an institution. It was decided at a meeting attended by Karl and Albrecht Haushofer, Dr. Steinacher, Dr. Ernst and Dr. Ullmann (the major traditionalist leaders of the VR) on 2 February 1935 that they would abandon the VR.

Die Mitglieder des Volksdeutschen Rates sind einmütig der Auffassung, daß aus der Pflicht heraus, die sie gegenüber dem Stellvertreter des Führers tragen, ein Weiterarbeiten des Volksdeutschen Rates bei dieser neuen Sachlage zur Zeit unmöglich ist. Sie glauben einmütig, daß ein solches Weiterarbeiten erst dann wieder fruchtbringend sein könne, wenn einmal in der sachlichen Frage Polens eine der bisherigen Grundlinie entsprechende neue Entscheidung sichergestellt ist, weiter allgemein die volksdeutsche Grundlinie der Arbeit des Volksdeutschen Rates wieder hergestellt wird; dabei glauben sie, daß diese volksdeutsche Arbeit in einem Zusammenwirken mit Gauleiter Bohle oder Graf Yorck nach diesen Vorgängen nicht mehr möglich ist.³⁴

The end of the VR was assured on 3 February 1935 when Karl Haushofer tendered his resignation in a letter to Rudolf Hess. "Du weißt, wie leicht mir persönlich die Bitte um Entlassung aus allen meinen Ämtern würde."³⁵ Haushofer cited his differences with Bohle and Wartenburg as the main reasons why he decided to tender his resignation as President of the VR:

Du wirst und mußt verstehen, daß nicht nur für meine Berliner Mitstreiter [d.h. des VR], sondern auch für mich selbst nach allem in der letzten Zeit Vorgefallenen eine vertrauensvolle und fruchtbringende Zusammenarbeit mit Bohle und Yorck unmöglich geworden ist. Wenn Du willst, daß die volksdeutschen Aufgaben erfüllt werden, und

³⁴Das Ende des VR, 2 February 1935, in Steinacher, no. 64, pp. 268-269.

³⁵Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 3 February 1935, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 104, p. 187.

vermeiden willst, daß über der Leiche des Volksdeutschen Rats ein allgemeines Handgemenge zwischen einem halben Dutzend Ministerien entsteht, dann müssen die Formen wieder geschaffen werden, in denen gearbeitet werden kann, ohne ständige Querschüsse! Die Erfahrung der letzten Monate hat meine böse Vorahnung bestätigt, daß Bohle nur eine scharf gezogene Grenze (vielleicht!) anerkennt; er darf aber im volksdeutschen Bereich nichts zu befehlen haben. Daneben aber bedarf es eines Mannes in Deinem Stab, der volksdeutsche Fragen verantwortlich bearbeitet, und dieser Mann muß unser beider Vertrauen haben.³⁶

The VR's strong independent position, therefore, lasted only for one and a half years. Hess's decision to appoint Bohle and Ribbentrop as members of the VR essentially undermined the reason for its existence; it was no longer independent nor was it separate from the Nazi party. The situation worsened for the non-National Socialist Germandom workers on 15 April 1935 when Hess again elevated the AO to the status of a Gau. Bohle's influence in the field of Germandom was seemingly ever increasing. With the VR gone, the VDA, as the only influential non-National Socialist Germandom organization, was forced to bear the brunt against attacks by National Socialist Germandom organizations. The non-National Socialist Germandom workers, however, received a glimmer of hope when the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia, led by Konrad Henlein, achieved a stunning victory in the elections of 19 May 1935. Hitler further offered the non-National Socialist Germandom workers hope in a speech delivered to the Reichstag on 21 May 1935. He declared that he would not tolerate the assimilation of the German

³⁶Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 3 February 1935 in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 104, p. 188.

nationals in foreign countries as advocated by Bohle and Wartenburg on 1 February 1935. The Volksdeutsche "have [after all] the right to live in their own way and that it is not a question whether Germany wants them or not but whether they themselves want to be Germans or not."³⁷ Although Hitler's speech on 21 May 1935 and the victory of Henlein's Sudeten German Party were not enough to eclipse the increased Nazification within the field of Germandom, an unexpected event in 1935 helped to prolong the existence of the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations, Bohle's fall from power.

As illustrated above, Hess's decision to make the AO an official Gau on 15 April 1935 again increased Bohle's influence within the Party and within the field of Germandom. Bohle's increased influence and powers did not, however, go unchallenged in Germany. As quoted above, Neurath's letter to Hess on 29 April 1935 demonstrated that Germany's Foreign Minister objected vehemently to Bohle's encroachments in foreign affairs. Neurath's future successor as Foreign Minister also objected to Bohle's increased powers as Steinacher noted with satisfaction on 20 June 1935. "'Now it's really hit the fan. Bohle's managed to get everybody up against him. So I'm not alone any more. Bohle's strongest opponent is Ribbentrop. The coming man A. Haushofer is supposed to be his political mentor.'"³⁸ Ribbentrop was therefore becoming Bohle's greatest rival in

³⁷Adolf Hitler's address to the Reichstag on 21 May 1935, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. IV, p. 172.

³⁸Smelser, pp. 123-124.

the field of Germandom. Since Ribbentrop was Plenipotentiary for Foreign Policy Questions, it was only natural that a rivalry would arise with Bohle who was constantly trying to exert influence in foreign countries. The first confrontation between Ribbentrop and Bohle occurred at a meeting attended by Hess, Hess's adjutant Alfred Leitigen, Karl Haushofer, Ribbentrop and Bohle, called by Bohle himself, on 16 July 1935.³⁹ At this meeting, Bohle again demanded jurisdiction over the Volksdeutsche. Ribbentrop pointed out why such an extension of Bohle's powers would be impossible. Bohle subsequently flew into a rage and threatened to resign his offices if his powers were not extended. "As always the temporizer, Hess offered him the consolation prize of responsibility for all Germans in South America, bestowing competency with the remark: 'There we won't get into a war so fast.'"⁴⁰ The waning of Bohle's fortune demonstrated that the AO would not fill the void created by the demise of the VR. Ribbentrop would not, under any circumstances, allow Bohle to further increase his authority within the field of Germandom. An institution was still necessary, therefore, to unify the work of the various Germandom organizations. The void filled by the demise of the VR was finally filled in October 1935 by the Büro Kursell, the predecessor of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle.

³⁹See Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, pp. 218-222; McKale, pp. 96-97; Smelser, pp. 124-125.

⁴⁰Smelser, p. 125.

Chapter 5: The Büro Kursell and the Continuation of the Gleichschaltung

Vermehrung um drei besonders bewährte Pg. müßte das Verständnis für die Wirksamkeit des VR in weiten Kreisen der NSDAP vergrößern.¹

Karl Haushofer's decision on 3 February 1935 to resign from the leadership of the VR essentially signified its demise. Haushofer's resignation did not, however, signify his retirement from the field of Germandom. In the summer and autumn of 1935, Karl and Albrecht Haushofer and Rudolf Hess agreed that changes had to be effected in the virtually defunct VR. It was decided that a party member, preferably an 'alte Kämpfer', who would also act as a reliable liaison between the non-National Socialist and National Socialist Germandom workers should fill the leadership in the reorganized VR.² In a letter from Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess on 4/5 June 1935, Haushofer informed Hess of the superfluousness of the VR in its present form. "Mit Deiner grundsätzlichen Absage an diese Ostgrenzlandtagung ist der VR als Idee gegenstandslos und sinnlos geworden, auch wenn ein Versuch zu seiner Galvanisierung in irgend einer Form gemacht werden sollte."³ On 24 July 1935, Karl Haushofer sent Ribbentrop a list of possible candidates for the leadership of the Germandom organization that would replace the VR in order to broaden its confidence base in the NSDAP. Haushofer wrote in a covering letter:

¹Karl Haushofer to Joachim von Ribbentrop, 24 July 1935, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 117, p. 211.

²Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 226.

³Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 4/5 June 1935, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 111, p. 200.

Im weiteren Verlauf vor der Verpflichtung stehend, Ihnen Vorschläge zum Umbau des VR zu machen, wodurch die wohl mit freundlichen Dankschreiben nicht mehr zu berufenen Mitglieder, wie die Herren Dr. Pechel und Dr. Ullmann [both leading figures in the VR] ersetzt werden und eine Verbreiterung der Vertrauensgrundlage in der NSDAP erreicht wird, möchte ich Ihnen mit der Anfrage nach Ihrer Billigung etwa folgende Persönlichkeiten alphabetisch nennen: [...].⁴

As late as 11 October 1935, both Karl Haushofer and Rudolf Hess were still discussing the reorganization of the VR. Herr Schwager, an official of the Economic Department, wrote on 11 October 1935: "Regierungsrat Krahmer-Möllengerg [the head of the Deutsche Stiftung which provided funds for the Volksdeutsche] told me yesterday in confidence that his information was that Reich Minister Hess and General [Karl] Haushofer were to come to Berlin next week to carry out the reorganization of the Volksdeutsche Council."⁵ Herr Schwager also wrote that Hess and Ribbentrop suggested as well that the VDA revert to its original role as an association for schools abroad and that all political, economic, social and scientific tasks should revert to other German institutions. Although the Gleichschaltung of the non-National Socialist German organizations seemed inevitable, these changes were not immediately effected. The mere suggestion that the VDA revert to its original role illustrated that the existing division of powers between the AO, VDA and VR that Hess defined on 16 July 1935 could not continue.

⁴Karl Haushofer to Joachim von Ribbentrop, 24 July 1935, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 117, p. 209.

⁵Memorandum by an Official of the Economic Department, 11 October 1935, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. IV, no. 347, p. 721.

Two memoranda by Friedrich Stieve, Director of Department VI, dated 19 July and 26 July 1935, outlined the need to reorganize the existing division of powers between the AO, the VDA and the VR. Although these two memoranda no longer exist, they are summarized in Documents on German Foreign Policy.

They referred:

(i) to Stieve having heard of an order by Hess redistributing duties between the Auslandsorganisation, the VDA and the Büro Ribbentrop, and (ii) to information about an agreement between Ribbentrop and Hess on the division of work between the Büro Ribbentrop and the Auslandsorganisation. Both of these arrangements, of which no further details have been found, limited the Auslandsorganisation's field of work with Reich Germans abroad; but while the former [memorandum] divided the volksdeutsch work between the Büro [Ribbentrop] and the VDA, the latter [memorandum] made no mention of the VDA.⁶

When the reorganization of the VR finally occurred in the third week of October 1935, one of the candidates suggested by Haushofer in his letter to Ribbentrop on 24 July 1935 was appointed to the leadership of the reformed VR. Otto von Kursell became the leader of the reformed VR which was officially called the Volksdeutsche Parteidienststelle although it was increasingly called and referred to after October 1935 as the Büro Kursell. By March 1936, the Büro Kursell was occasionally referred to as the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi. For matters of simplicity, the VoMi will be referred to during Kursell's tenure as its leader as the

⁶Memorandum by an Official of the Economic Department, 11 October 1935, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. IV, no. 347, p. 721, n. 3.

Büro Kursell.⁷

Otto von Kursell was a perfect liaison between Hess, the non-National Socialist and the National Socialist German workers. He was born in St. Petersburg on 28 November 1884. Kursell studied architecture at the universities of Riga and Dresden and subsequently attended the Academy for Fine Arts in Munich. From 1912 until 1914, he lived in Munich where he painted portraits. Following the outbreak of the First World War, Kursell enlisted in the army where he served in the Russian campaign "ohne jedoch an die Front zu kommen."⁸ After the war, Kursell returned to Munich where he developed an affinity with the National Socialist Party which he subsequently joined in 1922. His participation in the Hitler putsch on 9 November 1923 enhanced his status within the party. Despite his status as an 'alte Kämpfer', he did not support nor endorse the racial ideals of the National Socialists. He was not an Anti-Semite nor did he ever display any Anti-Semitic tendencies; Jacobsen described Kursell as "aber Antisemit im nationalsozialistischen Sinne scheint er niemals gewesen zu sein."⁹ Kursell was described as an artist and gentleman par excellence. He was polite, sensitive and a romantic idealist.¹⁰ His noble qualities are not often associated with members of

⁷For a good summary of Kursell's personal background and a good outline of the Büro Kursell look in Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, pp. 225-234.

⁸Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 226.

⁹Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 227.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 227.

the Nazi Party, and they are especially not often associated with participants of the Hitler putsch of 9 November 1923. Kursell's personal background and his background in the National Socialist party provided him with excellent credentials to act as a liaison between both the non-National Socialist and National Socialist German organizations. Steinacher wrote of Kursell's extensive links with the National Socialists in a short paper entitled 'Das Büro Kursell'.

So viele Vorzeichen der Zeiterfordernisse hatte Kursell auf sich gehäuft, daß eine gute Entwicklung der volksdeutschen Aufgaben erwartet werden konnte. Ich war mit ihm schon des öfteren zusammengekommen und hatte mich gut mit ihm verstanden. Er mühte sich ehrlich, die Probleme der volksdeutschen Lage zu erkennen und den echten Aufgaben vorwärts zu helfen. Kursell war ein etwas blasser Mann, konnte eine gewisse Schüchternheit nicht überwinden. Ihm fehlte zu sehr jenes forsche Auftreten, das nachgerade der Stil in der NSDAP geworden war. Kursell war ein hochanständiger Charakter, wenngleich er schwer aus sich herauskam. Ein rechtschaffener Mann, aber eine starke Persönlichkeit war er nicht.¹¹

When Kursell was named to lead the newly created Büro Kursell in October 1935 (the exact date of Kursell's appointment is not known), the Gleichschaltung of the German organizations was at hand.

The functions of the Büro Kursell essentially mirrored those of the VR.

The so-called 'Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle' [the Büro Kursell] has been created in order to give unified direction to the Reich's policy concerning Volksdeutsche. All the Reich and Party authorities which deal with political questions concerning Volksdeutsche have been united in this organization. The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle will deal with all relevant spheres of national [*völkischen*] life and will issue directives. Because of the confidential nature of the subjects to be dealt with, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle will not appear in public; for

¹¹Das Büro Kursell, in Steinacher, no. 56, p. 244.

the same reason the number of persons who are to be called upon to take part in the conferences of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle will be limited. [...]

1) In respect of volksdeutsch questions dealing with the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the representation of the Foreign Ministry interests, both in the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and in the organizations associated with it, are to be exclusively the province of Department VI [...].

3) In the event of grants of money for volksdeutsch purposes being sponsored by other Departments, Department VI is to be brought in for counter signature.¹²

The Büro Kursell was therefore empowered, as had been the VR, to coordinate all activities relating to the Volksdeutsche. The Büro Kursell, as its predecessor the VR had been, was a secret organization. Unlike the VR, however, the Büro Kursell was not autonomous from party influence. The rationality behind the reorganization of the VR, which culminated in Hess's decision to name Otto von Kursell its leader, opposed the original rationality behind the creation of the VR. The VR's power and influence was due to its autonomy from the Nazi Party. It was exactly for this reason, however, that Hess decided that the VR should be reorganized under the leadership of a Nazi Party member.

The Büro Kursell was a party office under the control of Ribbentrop in his capacity as plenipotentiary in the Foreign Ministry; the "traditionalists [non-National Socialist German workers] no longer had any institutional independence [...]."¹³ Although Kursell's appointment was agreeable to both non-

¹²Internal Directive, March 1936, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. V, Editors Note, p. 610.

¹³Smelser, p. 129.

National Socialist and National Socialist German workers, he was not nearly as politically detached as Karl Haushofer had been. Not only was he a relatively high ranking Nazi Party member, he was also an honorary member of Heinrich Himmler's Schutzstaffeln der NSDAP or the SS. The changes surrounding the leadership of the Büro Kursell mirrored the changes made to its staff.

The former members of the VR had been "older, experienced German workers fighters who had been working in the field long before the Nazis had come to power. Even more important, seven out of eight of the VR circle had never been members of the party at all."¹⁴ Kursell's staff, on the other hand, consisted mostly of Nazi party members many of whom were also members in the SS.¹⁵ The changes effected by Hess and Kursell in the greatly reorganized VR essentially marked the beginning of the end for the non-National Socialist German workers.

On 23 April 1936, Hess greatly increased Kursell's influence in the field of German workers. He declared that the Büro Kursell was the only organization authorized to work exclusively on Volksdeutsche questions. "[E]r solle die Arbeit der verschiedenen Stellen im Reich, die sich mit volksdeutschen Fragen beschäftigen, in Übereinstimmung bringen, um das 'Wirken unverantwortlicher Stellen oder Persönlichkeiten' auszuschalten."¹⁶ As of 23 April 1936, the Büro

¹⁴Smelser, p. 129.

¹⁵Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, pp. 228-229.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 230.

Kursell possessed greater powers than the VR had ever possessed. Despite the increased power and influence of the Büro Kursell, the most powerful non-National Socialist Germandom organization, the VDA, was not immediately coordinated. Initially, Kursell even attempted to protect Steinacher and the VDA from Nazi encroachments.¹⁷ Despite Kursell's initial support of Steinacher and the VDA, National Socialist ideals slowly gained precedence in Germandom work. This was evidenced in March 1936 when Kursell "decided not to bail out a financially strapped volksdeutsche newspaper because its editorial stance was not sympathetic enough with National Socialism."¹⁸

Although the Büro Kursell was essentially a Nazified VR which was reorganized to Nazify and unify the Germandom organizations, Hess created yet another non-National Socialist Germandom organization. He created the Volksdeutsche Arbeitskreise or VA, which was again led by Karl Haushofer. Haushofer's retirement from Germandom work had been short lived. "Wie es scheint, ist dieser VA zum ersten Male Mitte Oktober 1935 im 'Volksdeutschen Klub' zusammengetreten."¹⁹ Hess created the VA, therefore, at roughly the same time as he reorganized and Nazified the VR. Strangely, the VA had a similar function as the Büro Kursell. It was created so that a permanent institution could

¹⁷Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 230.

¹⁸Lumans, p. 38.

¹⁹Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 231.

mediate the exchange of thoughts between Hess, the Nazi Party and the various non-National Socialist Germandom organizations. Was not the choice of Kursell to lead the reformed VR, however, contingent upon his ability to mediate between the non-National Socialists and the National Socialist Germandom workers? Not surprisingly, the VA suffered a similar fate as the VR. Unlike the VR, however, it was essentially stillborn from its conception. Why Hess would create another non-National Socialist Germandom organization just after he had successfully transformed the VR from an independent non-National Socialist organization into a powerful National Socialist Germandom organization remains a mystery to this author. Hess' strong relationship with Karl Haushofer and his desire that Haushofer retain influence within the field of Germandom might have had something to do with his decision to create the VA. The VA's lack of effective power, however, illustrated the weakening position of Karl Haushofer and the non-National Socialist Germandom workers.

Kursell's leadership of the Büro Kursell did not last long. Kursell's fall from the leadership of the Büro Kursell was caused by a serious disagreement with Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS, who was just beginning to get involved in the field of Germandom. The source of the disagreement between the two men was a series of articles published in the Rumburger Zeitung, a newspaper from the Bohemian town of Rumburg. The Rumburger Zeitung was a German nationalist paper although its articles had increasingly attacked Konrad Henlein and the Sudeten German Party. The information printed by the newspaper, however,

"could only have been gleaned from very high places in the Reich."²⁰ Its coverage of events within the Reich was also uncharacteristically thorough for a volksdeutsche newspaper; it often included transcriptions of speeches made by high-ranking Nazi leaders.²¹ By chance, Kursell discovered that the Rumburger Zeitung was financed by Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich, the leader of the SS security apparatus. Following this discovery, Kursell on 17 December 1936 lodged a formal complaint at the Reich Chancellery against Himmler's and Heydrich's encroachment upon his domain. He also complained personally to Hermann Göring who subsequently issued a decree which gave Kursell the final say over all funds that were to be transferred to the various Volksdeutsche: "Dieser [Göring] gab sogleich einen Runderlaß heraus; danach durften in Zukunft die Devisen in volkspolitischen Angelegenheiten (monatlich: 850,000 RM) nur verteilt werden, wenn Kursell gegengezeichnet hatte."²² Himmler considered Kursell's action intolerable since Kursell's membership in the SS made him Himmler's subordinate. Hess was powerless to intervene on Kursell's behalf even though he was Kursell's direct superior: "Hess, even if he were so inclined, was already powerless to deter the SS."²³ Karl Haushofer, however, did attempt to intercede on Kursell's behalf. He met with Himmler's adjutant Karl Wolff in early December in order to discuss

²⁰Smelser, p. 183.

²¹Ibid., p. 183.

²²Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 231.

²³Lumans, p. 40.

Kursell's indiscretion. Haushofer outlined his meeting with Wolff to Hess on 10 December 1936. According to Haushofer, Wolff declared that Steinacher would be replaced as the head of the VDA by a high ranking SS officer while Kursell's position would be given to a trusted member of the Geheime Staatspolizei or the Gestapo. Haushofer wrote ironically to Hess saying if these changes materialized, he would retire to his estate, plant cabbage "in der stillen Hoffnung, noch vor der nächsten europäischen Katastrophe in die Grube zu fahren."²⁴ He then continued to outline how the proposed personnel changes would negatively affect the field of Germandom. He pleaded to Hess that he should cooperate with Ribbentrop in order to solicit a decision from Hitler which would remove the scenario described by Wolff:

Bevor ich das aber tun darf, muß ich zum Sachlichen noch einmal Stellung nehmen. Der Ersatz der bisherigen Arbeitsorganisation in VA und VDA durch den offenen Einsatz eines sehr hohen SS-Führers an Stelle Steinachers, durch eine sichtbare Verwendung Brockhausens und durch Übergabe der Stelle von Kursell an einen bewährten Vertreter der Geheimen Staatspolizei bedeutet einen völligen Systemwechsel der ganzen Arbeit, der dann vertreten werden kann, wenn unsere außen- und wehrpolitische Lage so positiv zu bewerten wäre, daß die unvermeidlichen, und schweren außen- und volkspolitischen Rückschläge einer solchen Umstellung zurückgestellt werden könnten gegenüber den zweifellos vorhandenen innerpolitischen Vorteilen. Hier liegt über alles Persönliche hinaus eine so große politische Entscheidung, daß ich Dich bitte, im Zusammenwirken mit Ribbentrop, der unter keinen Umständen übergangen werden darf, und mit Berücksichtigung der wehrpolitischen Interessen, eine grundsätzliche Entscheidung des Führers

²⁴Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 10 December 1936, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 163, p. 306.

herbeizuführen.²⁵

Despite the vehemence of the above letter, nothing could be done by Hess nor anyone else that would have saved Kursell's position as head of the Büro Kursell. In mid-December, Himmler summoned Kursell to his headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. At this meeting, which was also attended by Wolff and Ribbentrop, Himmler demanded that Kursell resign his membership in the SS. Himmler used Kursell's connections with the Baltische Bruderschaft, a non-National Socialist Germandom organization based in Estonia, as the pretext for his dismissal. Since Himmler referred to the Baltische Bruderschaft as a Marxist and reactionary institution, it followed that Kursell's membership in that Bruderschaft would be considered a risk to the security of the Reich.²⁶ On 9 January 1937, Kursell received a letter from Hess which relieved him of all duties as leader of the Büro Kursell. On 19 January 1937, ten days later, Albrecht Haushofer wrote to his father informing him of Kursell's dismissal which he referred to as a tragedy:

Als Zweites die Tragödie von K[ursell]. Denn es ist eine. Der Abschluß der Untersuchung bei den Schwarzen Leuten- ich bin vom Botschafter bevollmächtigt, Dir davon Mitteilung zu machen- läßt die Baltische Bruderschaft im Licht einer gefährlichen, staatsfeindlichen Organisation erscheinen, deren führender Bruder nur mit Rücksicht auf seine sonstigen Verdienste seine Entlassung aus der SS nehmen

²⁵Karl Haushofer to Rudolf Hess, 10 December 1936, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 163, pp. 306-307.

²⁶Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 232.

durfte.²⁷

As Kursell's temporary replacement as the leader of the Büro Kursell, Hess named Franz Wehofsich who was Kursell's adjutant. Wehofsich's experience in the field of Germandom work differentiated him from the other members of Kursell's staff who "were far more oriented to the needs of the new Reich than [... to the needs] of the different ethnic German groups."²⁸ He, therefore, pleased both non-National Socialist and National Socialist Germandom workers alike although his tenure, like Kursell's, was short lived. It was no longer necessary to appease both the non-National Socialists and the National Socialists involved in the field of Germandom.

Otto von Kursell's position as the leader of the Büro Kursell enabled him to act as a liaison between the non-National Socialist VDA and National Socialist Germandom organizations. His membership in the SS, however, enabled Himmler and the SS to gain a foothold in the field of Germandom. One must question Himmler's motives behind his desire to gain a foothold in the field of Germandom. One possible reason is that Himmler's control over the Volksdeutsche, which numbered just under ten million persons or the population of a small European state, would greatly increase his influence and power. The Volksdeutsche could provide Himmler with another power base "to go along with the SS, the Reich

²⁷Albrecht Haushofer to Karl Haushofer, 19 January 1937, in Jacobsen, Haushofer, Bd. II, no. 166, p. 311.

²⁸Smelser, p. 129.

security system, the growing concentration camp network, and the developing armed SS units, the future Waffen SS."²⁹ The Volksdeutsche could act both as a potential source of intelligence as well as manpower. Also, since the Volksdeutsche remained a relatively homogeneous racial body, they fulfilled National Socialist racial guidelines. "The vision of Germanic peasant soldiers colonizing the East under a feudal-like knightly order had been floating around in [Himmler's] mind for some time."³⁰ Hess's appointment of Kursell to lead the Büro Kursell allowed Himmler to enter the field of Germandom. Although Hess and Ribbentrop were Kursell's direct supervisors, Himmler exerted his authority over Kursell due to his honorary membership in the SS. When it became clear that Kursell would not perform Himmler's bidding, Himmler had Kursell's membership in the SS removed. Himmler did not stop here, however. He then used his influence to have Kursell removed from his post as leader of the Büro Kursell. Kursell's fall from power demonstrated how Himmler could effectively exploit one's membership in the SS in order to further his power and influence. Himmler's growing influence in the field of Germandom was further demonstrated when it became time to appoint Kursell's permanent successor as leader of the Büro Kursell. It was on Himmler's suggestion that Hess appointed SS Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz as the permanent leader of the Büro Kursell or as the institution was henceforth officially

²⁹Lumans, pp. 38-39.

³⁰Lumans, p. 39.

called, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi. Himmler's influence in the field of Germandom was definitely on the rise. It was Himmler's rising influence in the field of Germandom that assured the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations. The VoMi succeeded where the VR and the Büro Kursell had previously failed. Under the leadership of Lorenz, the VoMi was able to coordinate all Germandom organizations in the Reich. Lorenz and the VoMi, therefore, completed the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations.

Chapter 6: The VoMi, the VDA and the Completion of the Gleichschaltung

Göring sei gegen mich, Neurath sei auch nicht mehr für mich. Italien verlange meinen Rücktritt. Auch die Haushofer stünden nicht mehr zu mir. Ich hätte zudem keine eindeutig nationalsozialistische Haltung eingenommen: dafür sei Südtirol das Beispiel. Ich sei auch kein Nationalsozialist. Auf diesen Vorwurf hatte ich keine Antwort.¹

Rudolf Hess selected SS Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz, on the basis of Heinrich Himmler's suggestion, to replace Otto von Kursell on 1 January 1937 as the leader of the Büro Kursell or as the institution was officially called, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle or VoMi. Hess clearly understood and foresaw Himmler's rising influence; in order to "achieve lasting harmony in the Volkstum field, to complete the Gleichschaltung, and to get in step with the political realities of Third Reich infighting, [Hess] would have to secure the cooperation and participation of the SS."²

SS Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz was born in Grünhof bei Stolp in Pomerania on 2 October 1891. He trained for a career as an army officer in the Kadettenkorps. In October 1912, Lorenz entered the Second Battery, First Field Artillery Regiment, of Prince Albert of Prussia. The following spring, he became an officer candidate in the "Jg. Rgt. zu Pferde Nr. 4 [...], bis er 1914 als Leutnant ins Feld rückte."³ With the outbreak of the First World War, Lorenz was

¹Das Ende: Meine 'Beurlaubung', in Steinacher, no. 106, p. 416.

²Lumans, p. 41.

³Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 237.

transferred from the Fourth Mounted Rifles Regiment into another mounted regiment where he earned the Iron Cross, Second Class. By the end of the First World War, Lorenz had attained "the rank of Oberleutnant, and had earned the Iron Cross, First Class, and the Ehrenkreuz."⁴ Following the armistice, Lorenz remained in the army where he led a border defense squadron in the Grenzschutz Freikorps in the brief war against the Poles. He remained with this border squadron until its disbandment in March 1919.⁵ The limitations imposed on the size of Germany's army, following the imposition of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919, essentially ended Lorenz's hopes for continuing a career in the military. Fortunately for Lorenz, his marriage to Charlotte Ventski eased his transition to civilian life. Charlotte Ventski was described as "a rich and very ambitious woman"⁶ from Graudenz which was located on the Vistula in a part of West Prussia that was incorporated into the new Polish state. Due to his elevated status, Lorenz was able to lease an estate in Danzig where he also purchased "a sawmill, a grinding mill, and a distillery."⁷ Lorenz's farming skills were not very strong. Hermann Rauschning described Lorenz as "a sort of amateur farmer [... who] farmed his

⁴Lumans, p. 46.

⁵Lorenz Affidavit, in Records of the United States Nürnberg War Crimes Trials: United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt Et. Al. (Case VIII) 10 October 1947-10 March 1948, 38 Reels, (Washington, 1972), Reel 14, Prosecution Document Book I-IVD, Document Book I, Lorenz, no. NO-4701, p. 27. (Hereafter, Case VIII)

⁶Hermann Rauschning, Men of Chaos, (New York, 1971), p. 25.

⁷Lumans, p. 46.

property on the 'biological' method of Rudolf Steiner, the anthroposophist, and the result was that the financial return from his farming grew steadily more meagre."⁸ Although Lorenz's financial returns from farming were meagre, his wife's fortune was sufficient to sustain an upper class lifestyle. His shortcomings as a farmer did not, however, diminish his superior social skills for which he was famous.

As in the case of Otto von Kursell, many people, both Nazis and non-Nazis held favourable opinions of Lorenz. Hermann Rauschning, who spoke highly of Lorenz's military background, described him as "an innocent bon vivant, fond of his joke and of wine and women."⁹ Georg Skowronski, an anti-Nazi witness at Lorenz's trial at Nuremberg, described Lorenz as open, decent, trustworthy and noble. "He was a gentleman to the last, which unfortunately, could not be said of most of the leading National Socialists."¹⁰ Hans-Heinrich Schulz, a lawyer who knew Lorenz through his association with Charlotte Ventski's family, also spoke very favourably of Lorenz. He stated: "I noticed that Werner Lorenz was not the average kind of SS-man [since he] looked at my adverse attitude [towards the National Socialist party] not without sympathy. I could observe that Werner Lorenz did certainly not agree with the aims of the Nazi party in as far as they were

⁸Rauschning, p. 25.

⁹Rauschning, p. 25.

¹⁰Political Reference by Georg Skowronski, in Case VIII, Reel 28, Document Book I: Lorenz, Lorenz Document no. 2, p. 1.

of inhumane or even cruel nature."¹¹ Lorenz was also able to produce Jewish witnesses who testified on his behalf at Nuremberg. Casimir Johannes Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg described how Lorenz helped his step-father who was half Jewish. "He declared that he himself was very closely connected by friendship with various Jews who had suffered the same fate as my step-father [who was stripped of his professional licence and was placed in the Buchenwald concentration camp] and he endeavoured at [... that] time to get them out of confinement."¹² Although the character witnesses who testified on Lorenz's behalf at Nuremberg probably exaggerated his noble qualities, there is no doubt that Lorenz was not a Nazi nor an SS member in the same mould as a Himmler or a Heydrich. His ideological ties to the Nazi Party, however, were substantially greater than those of the non-National Socialist German leaders or even of his predecessor Otto von Kursell, as Lorenz' swift rise through the ranks of the SS demonstrated.

Lorenz's interest and involvement in the NSDAP began in 1929. In 1930, the Gauleiter of Danzig, Albert Forster, introduced Lorenz to Heinrich Himmler who attempted to convince Lorenz to join the National Socialist party and the SS. Himmler's numerous visits to Lorenz's estate finally convinced Lorenz to join the NSDAP and the SS on 1 December 1930. His party number was 397,994 while

¹¹Statement by Hans-Heinrich Schulz, in Case VIII, Reel 28, Document Book I: Lorenz, Lorenz Document no. 14, p. 5.

¹²Affidavit of Casimir Johannes Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleberg, in Case VIII, Document Book I: Lorenz, Lorenz Doc. no. 21, p. 10.

his SS number was 6,636.¹³ When questioned at his trial at Nuremberg why he joined the SS, Lorenz feigned ignorance. He stated that in the Free State of Danzig, there "was only one SS leader and twenty SS men altogether."¹⁴ Lorenz stressed that due to the small concentration of SS members in Danzig, he could not possibly have known the SS's ideology nor their future aims. Despite this claim of ignorance, Lorenz continued to justify his entry into the SS by outlining seven basic aims of the SS which had initially been outlined to him by Himmler.

The first point, was to find people who were especially efficient in their jobs; secondly, emphasis on a social attitude in every way of life; thirdly, a sound and unobjectionable family life; fourthly, the creation of a living community of the people; fifthly, stress on the intellectual qualities in education and other matters; sixthly, no ambition for rank and political power; seventh, refusal of political corruption.¹⁵

Lorenz's claim of ignorance and his idyllic description of the SS's programme as outlined to him by Himmler could not eradicate his service record in the SS. His rapid rise through the ranks of the SS demonstrated that his knowledge and understanding of the SS's aims must have been more than superficial.

In March 1931, Lorenz attained the rank of SS Sturmbannführer. By July 1933, Lorenz had been elevated to the rank of SS Brigadeführer. In February

¹³Lorenz Affidavit, in Case VIII, Reel 14, Prosecution Book I, Lorenz, no. NO-4701, p. 27.

¹⁴Lorenz Testimony, 18 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2742.

¹⁵Lorenz Testimony, 18 December 1947, Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2742.

1934, Lorenz again was promoted; he reached the rank of SS Gruppenführer. In November 1936, after only five and a half years, Lorenz reached the apex of his career; he attained the rank of SS Obergruppenführer.¹⁶ When asked at his trial why his rise through the SS ranks had been so swift, Lorenz stated that following Hitler's ascension to power on 30 January 1933, a number of new recruits volunteered for the SS. This vast influx of personnel created a number of high leadership positions which benefited early SS members such as Lorenz.¹⁷ Although the reasons Lorenz provided in Nuremberg concerning his rapid rise through the ranks of the SS are partly true, he could not possibly have held such a high rank and, also, remained ignorant of the SS's and the National Socialists' ideology. The conflicts Lorenz described at his trial between himself and Himmler were also exaggerated. Had Lorenz's differences with Himmler been as great as he described them, he would never have obtained the rank of SS Obergruppenführer.

At his trial at Nuremberg, Lorenz described three major conflicts he had with Himmler. The first conflict Lorenz described concerned the arrest of two prominent businessmen from Hamburg during the Röhm putsch. According to Lorenz's version, he flew to meet with Himmler in Berlin in order to intervene on the arrested men's behalf. Himmler subsequently shouted at Lorenz for overstepping

¹⁶Lorenz Affidavit, in Case VIII, Reel 14, Prosecution Document Book I, Lorenz, no. NO-4701, p. 27.

¹⁷Lorenz Testimony, 17 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2732.

his bounds. Despite Himmler's alleged reaction, the two Hamburg businessmen were released; Lorenz's intervention won their release although "this incident no doubt sowed some seeds of discord [between Lorenz and Himmler]."¹⁸ The second conflict with Himmler Lorenz outlined at his trial concerned an order Himmler gave him in which he was to influence all the men under his command to abandon their church affiliations. Lorenz, however, refused to implement this order. At his trial at Nuremberg, Lorenz justified his actions by stating that "'before joining the SS the people weren't told anything about this. Now that they have joined the SS, you can't suddenly approach them with something they haven't heard before. I won't do that. It is not my job.'"¹⁹ The third and final rift with Himmler that Lorenz described at his trial concerned the religious upbringing of his children. Although Himmler desired that all members of the SS renounce Christianity, all three of Lorenz's children were confirmed while his two daughters were married in church services in 1941 and 1942 respectively. Despite these conflicts, Lorenz' insistence upon the differences between himself and Heinrich Himmler at his trial were likely exaggerated. If relations between the two men were as intolerable as Lorenz portrayed them, he would surely not have risen up the ranks of the SS as quickly as he did. Although differences surely existed between Lorenz and Himmler, the similarities that existed must have greatly outweighed the differences.

¹⁸Lumans, p. 48.

¹⁹Lorenz Testimony, 18 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2744.

One should also take into account that not everyone who knew Lorenz was charmed by his personality.

One critic of Lorenz was Hans Steinacher, the non-National Socialist leader of the VDA. He was extremely unimpressed with Lorenz' credentials within the field of Germandom.

So hatte ich mich entschlossen, zu versuchen, mit Lorenz zusammenzuarbeiten. Wer aber war dieser Mann? Er verstand sich auf Handel mit Reittieren, aber von den volklichen Fragen des Deutschtums in der Welt beherrschte er nicht einmal die Voraussetzungen der Geographie, und das volkliche Gesamtproblem sah er bestenfalls durch die Brille des Deutschtums im polnischen Korridor. [...] Lorenz war ein Nichtskönner und ein Ignorant. Dabei war er von jener Unaufrichtigkeit und Verlogenheit, wie sie in der NSDAP in den höheren Rängen gezüchtet worden war, daß jedes Mittel recht sei, wenn es im Augenblick nütze.²⁰

Although Steinacher's criticism concerning Lorenz' lack of practical experience within the field of Germandom was justified, Lorenz was not appointed to lead the VoMi on the basis of his practical experience. Himmler had suggested Lorenz to Hess because he thought that Lorenz could succeed where Karl Haushofer and Otto von Kursell had previously failed. Although both Haushofer and Kursell possessed significant experience in the field of Germandom, especially Haushofer, neither was able to effectively coordinate the various Germandom organizations. According to Karl Wolff's, Himmler's adjutant's, testimony at Nuremberg on 5 December 1947, Himmler's selection of Lorenz to head the VoMi was based not on any practical

²⁰Die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, in Steinacher, doc. no. 102, p. 389.

experience but on his social skills. "Himmler himself had neither the necessary time nor inclination to carry out any social representations on any large scale besides his other duties in Berlin [...]. For that reason he selected **Obergruppenführer Lorenz** to direct [...the VoMi]."²¹ Since the VoMi was basically an intermediary body which connected "the NSDAP, the SS, the *Volkstum* organizations in the Reich, the minorities, the Reich ministries, and even in some cases officials of foreign governments[...]"²², a candidate was needed to mediate between all these bodies. Lorenz' superior social skills and his ability to mediate outweighed, in Himmler's mind, his shortcomings caused by his lack of practical experience in the field of Germandom. Since Lorenz lacked practical experience in the field of Germandom, it was necessary that Himmler appoint to Lorenz's staff someone who would be able to ensure that the administrative functions of VoMi would continue. Himmler, therefore, "provided Lorenz, for the preparation and carrying out of the practical work, with one of his best people, that is, the SS **Gruppenführer [Dr. Hermann] Behrends**."²³

Hermann Behrends was born in Rüstingen (Oldenburg) on 11 May 1907. From 1926 until 1931, Behrends studied law at the University of Marburg where

²¹Karl Wolff's Testimony, 5 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 3, p. 2011.

²²Lumans, p. 49.

²³Karl Wolff's Testimony, 5 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 3, p. 2011.

he obtained his doctorate in December 1931. By January 1932, he had decided to join the NSDAP since "he found himself one of a legion of well-educated young people in an economically depressed Germany without suitable employment."²⁴ One month later, Behrends joined the SS from where he soon transferred into Reinhard Heydrich's Sicherheitsdienst or SD. Behrends commanded the infamous Amt II in the SD Main Office which dealt with the Jews, churches and other enemies of the Third Reich. He remained at Amt II of the SD Main Office until he transferred to the VoMi in early 1937 where he served as Lorenz's Chief of Staff on the VoMi. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen referred to Behrends as the heart of the VoMi.²⁵ Karl Wolff's testimony adds weight to Jacobsen's assessment; "[i]n reality Behrends carried out the entire necessary work and prepared it."²⁶ To emphasize Wolff's statement, Dr. Werner Schubert, the Assistant Defence Counsellor representing Lorenz at Nuremberg, then asked Wolff if Behrends was in fact "the actual professional head of the VoMi and the expert there?"²⁷ to which Wolff answered yes. Lorenz, not surprisingly, also emphasized the role played by Behrends in the VoMi at his trial at Nuremberg: "I accepted the position as chief of the VoMi only under the condition that the expert work would be taken care

²⁴Lumans, p. 50.

²⁵Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 237.

²⁶Karl Wolff's Testimony, 5 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 3, p. 2011.

²⁷Ibid., p. 2011.

of by Behrends."²⁸ He then continued to stress his long absences from his office which further enhanced the conception that Behrends handled all operational aspects of the VoMi. Although it was true that Behrends probably knew more of the day-to-day affairs of the VoMi than Lorenz, Lorenz's role as leader of the VoMi should not be diminished. Behrends became a scapegoat used by the defendants at Nuremberg, of whom Lorenz was no exception, in order to diminish their own role in the VoMi. Behrends' character did not contradict the conception of him as portrayed at Nuremberg as the evil mastermind behind the VoMi. He was described as a prototype of the severe, cold SS leaders often associated with their forces. "Er zählte zur eigentlichen revolutionären Avantgarde des Dritten Reiches, die von den großen Aufgaben der 'kämpferischen Schutztruppe' des Nationalsozialismus durchdrungen war und die von Anfang an in der Errichtung eines 'Großgermanischen Reiches' in Mitteleuropa ihr erstrebenswertes letztes Ziel erblickte."²⁹ Again, however, the conception of Behrends as representing all that was evil within the Third Reich should not eclipse Lorenz's role as leader of the VoMi. The two men, together, provided the VoMi with an "invigorated leadership [...which] ensured the SS increased influence in, if not yet total control over, *Volksdeutsche* affairs."³⁰ Although the leadership came from within the ranks of the

²⁸Werner Lorenz' Testimony, 17 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2736.

²⁹Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 238.

³⁰Lumans, pp. 52-53.

SS, the staff of the VoMi (which initially consisted of roughly twenty men) initially was remarkably free of SS influence. The staff of the VoMi was also, relatively, experienced in the field of Germandom.

One example of an experienced Germandom worker on the Staff of VoMi was Franz Wehofsich who, due to his ten years experience in the field of Germandom was named to temporarily succeed Otto von Kursell following Kursell's dismissal. Although he had been a member of the SS since 1934, he remained a good friend of both Hans Steinacher and Karl Haushofer. Another experienced person in the field of Germandom on the staff of VoMi was Lorenz's deputy chief of staff, Wilhelm Luig. Luig had previously worked under Steinacher in the VDA before he transferred to the staff of VoMi. The VoMi's experienced staff somewhat justified Himmler's decision to appoint a man to the leadership of the VoMi who was not experienced in the field of Germandom.

The VoMi itself was divided into six major regional branches; Heinrich Lohl headed the administrative branch; Hans-Joachim Kubitz headed the North-Eastern Branch of the VoMi which included Poland, the Baltic States and the Memelland; Gunther Stier headed the Western Branch of the VoMi which included France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland; Franz Wehofsich and Franz Capra headed the South-Eastern Branch of the VoMi which included Austria, Czechoslovakia and the South Tyrol; Karl Henniger headed the Balkan Branch of the VoMi which included all the Balkan states and Rumania; and Georg Stahmer headed the Overseas Branch of the VoMi which included all the Volksdeutsche

situated outside Europe. Unfortunately, the internal structure of the VoMi from 1936 until 1939 is not well known nor, more important, well documented. There existed a personnel section, an administrative section in charge of finances, a legal section for minority rights and Behrends' office as Chief of Staff of VoMi at the VoMi's head office in Berlin. Although these sections are known, it is difficult to break down the office into further components since no organizational plan for the VoMi existed in its pre-settlement history.³¹ The success of the VoMi to coordinate all Germandom organizations within the Reich stemmed from the strong leadership of Lorenz and Behrends who were able to proceed with the coordination of the Germandom organizations rather than worry about the day-to-day affairs of the VoMi since they possessed such an experienced staff. Lorenz was able to represent the VoMi and the Germandom movement among the Reich leadership while Behrends' administrative skills improved the VoMi's efficiency and increased its powers.

The failure of the Büro Kursell to coordinate the various Germandom organizations within the Reich under the leadership of Otto von Kursell was demonstrated in a memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, Dr. Fritz von Twardowski on 14 January 1937.

As long as there is failure to achieve within the Reich a coordination of views about our policy towards the German communities and its exponents abroad, the struggle, with all its destructive consequences, will continue. [...]

³¹Lumans, note # 54, p. 268.

The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle on the staff of the Führer's Deputy, which is supposed to bring about an alignment of opinions and coordination of views in the Reich, has, despite the devoted activity of its Head and his staff, hitherto been able to score only limited successes, since it lacks any executive power.³²

Twardowski's criticism of Kursell's lack of effective executive leadership mirrored the motive behind Hess's and Himmler's decision to relieve Kursell from the leadership of the VoMi; Kursell's lack of executive authority made it impossible for him to coordinate the various Germandom organizations. Twardowski then outlined two possibilities that would enable the VoMi to facilitate its control over the Germandom organizations.

1) The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, which has been created by the Führer's Deputy to coordinate views in the Reich, should, in addition to this task of coordinating views, be provided with the necessary authority to issue directives and orders on the Party's policy regarding German communities which all offices and branches of the Party will have to observe; and

2) The competent Reich Departments, in consultation with the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, should bring into line their attitudes towards the question of the German communities. Of the greatest importance for this would be a clear directive from an authoritative quarter as to the order of priority in which the propagation of National Socialism and the preservation of the German national heritage among the Volksdeutsche are to be pursued.³³

Had Kursell possessed the powers outlined by Twardowski, he might have been able

³²Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 14 January 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 141, p. 288.

³³Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 14 January 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 141, p. 288.

to coordinate the German organizations.

The problems outlined by Twardowski on 14 January 1937 had previously been addressed by Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler as was illustrated in the previous chapter. Kursell, by 14 January 1937, had been removed from his post and his successor had been named. It was agreed on 1 January 1937 that SS Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz would succeed Otto von Kursell as the leader of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. Kursell received his letter of dismissal on 9 January 1937 although he was not publicly relieved by Lorenz until 27 January 1937. Twardowski could, therefore, not have known on 14 January 1937, of the events that had unfolded in the previous two weeks concerning the leadership of the VoMi since Hess's and Himmler's machinations were secret. His memorandum, however, supported the reasons why Hess and Himmler believed Kursell's removal from the leadership of the VoMi was essential.

Constantin Freiherr von Neurath, Germany's Foreign Minister, was informed of the changes within the leadership of the VoMi in a letter from Rudolf Hess dated 27 January 1937; eighteen days following the actual change of leadership.

I have entrusted SS Obergruppenführer Lorenz with the task of continuing and expanding the volksdeutsch work hitherto done by the Bureau von Kursell and he has been released for this purpose by the Reichsführer SS from the work he has been doing hitherto. Obergruppenführer Lorenz is responsible to me through the Commissioner for Questions of Foreign Policy, Ambassador von Ribbentrop. [...]

I would request that the collaboration in volksdeutsch matters, which are of such importance for foreign policy, should be maintained,

and where possible expanded, through the Bureau Lorenz.³⁴

Although Ribbentrop was, according to this document, Lorenz's nominal superior, Lorenz declared at his trial that at no time did Ribbentrop wield any influence over him: "I could only undertake steps for the racial groups abroad in agreement with the Foreign Office."³⁵ Ribbentrop's claim over the VoMi was therefore minimal; Hess and Himmler still maintained ultimate authority over the VoMi.³⁶

Following the official announcement of Lorenz's leadership over the VoMi, Ribbentrop outlined the official functions of the VoMi on 1 February 1937.

The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (previously Bureau von Kursell) will in future be under Obergruppenführer Lorenz as its director. The object of its work will be to keep the German community beyond the frontiers 'calm and united and to prevent it from destroying itself by any [internecine] conflicts.' Besides this it will watch over the rise of National Socialism, but in doing so will, at the Führer's and Chancellor's wish, strictly avoid difficulties with the foreign states concerned. It will therefore, when necessary, intervene to arbitrate, will lovingly foster the youthful elements whilst at the same time not repelling the old, but attempting gradually to win them over to National Socialism.³⁷

It was Hitler's desire, as stated through Ribbentrop, that the German work should not under any circumstances interfere in Germany's foreign policy in the

³⁴The Führer's Deputy to the Foreign Minister, 27 January 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 161, p. 340.

³⁵Werner Lorenz's Testimony, 17 December 1947, in Case VIII, Reel 4, p. 2734.

³⁶Lumans, p. 42.

³⁷Memorandum by the Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 1 February 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 168, p. 355.

various European countries. Ribbentrop then continued by declaring that no separate links would exist between Germany and the individual Volksdeutsche groups beyond Germany's frontiers. Beside this declaration in the original document, Foreign Minister Neurath wrote sarcastically "'Let's hope for the best.'"³⁸ Any suggestions concerning the field of Germandom were to be submitted directly to Lorenz. The VoMi was declared the only Germandom office, either state or party, authorized to deal directly with the German minorities abroad.

Ribbentrop's statement concerning the VDA essentially completed the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations. Although the VDA had previously been allowed to exist and continue independent of party influence, it was placed, after 1 February 1937, under the authority of the VoMi. "The VDA will be answerable to the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle in its work."³⁹ The independent position of the VDA, after 1 February 1937, no longer existed.

The VDA was from 1 February 1937 directly answerable to the VoMi. Lorenz did allow, however, the VDA to continue its activities in Germany and abroad as it had previously except that speeches by members of the VDA were forbidden "at any function of the party, its auxiliar[ies], or related

³⁸Ibid., doc. no. 168, note #3, p. 356.

³⁹Memorandum by the Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 1 February 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 168, p. 356.

organizations."⁴⁰ The VDA lost its financial independence when Karl Janovsky, a confidante of Party Treasurer Franz Schwarz, became treasurer of the VDA. Janovsky's appointment as treasurer of the VDA gave "the party complete control of the organization's finances."⁴¹ Lorenz's decision to allow the VDA to continue its activities in Germany and abroad as it had previously changed on 23 April 1937 when both Lorenz and Behrends stated in a confidential meeting at the Deutsche Auslandsinstitut that in order for Steinacher to maintain his position as leader of the VDA, he would have to coordinate the VDA into the National Socialist movement.

Im April 1937 erklärte SS-Oberführer Behrends, der Vertreter von Lorenz, in einem vertraulichen Gespräch Prof. Csaki vom DAI, daß Steinacher durch die Einsetzung des Obergruppenführers Lorenz die letzte Chance erhalten habe, den 'VDA in Ordnung zu bringen'.⁴²

Steinacher was given only one final chance to Nazify the VDA. Although Lorenz delivered an ultimatum to Steinacher that he had better Nazify the VDA, Lorenz was perfectly willing to protect Steinacher's organization from encroachments by Ernst Bohle and the AO. Although Bohle's authority increased significantly following his promotion to the leadership of the Auslandsorganization in the Foreign Ministry on 30 January 1937, Lorenz did not tolerate any encroachments upon his domain over the Volksdeutsche. When Bohle continued his attacks against

⁴⁰Smelser, p. 192.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 193.

⁴²Steinacher, p. XXVI.

the VDA, Lorenz threatened to veto Bohle's promotion to SS Gruppenführer.

Steinacher wrote:

Allerdings unter Zwang. Gauleiter Bohle, der ja nun als Chef AO, später als Staatssekretär im Auswärtigen Amt saß, wollte auch die Würde eines SS-Generals haben. Dazu war aber die Zustimmung aller seiner Vorgänger, also auch die von Lorenz erforderlich. Lorenz schilderte mit Vergnügen seinen Erfolg: Bohle saß vor ihm und er-Lorenz- stellte das Ultimatum, entweder Schluß mit aller Befehdung des VDA oder kein SS-Gruppenführer Bohle!⁴³

Despite Lorenz's pledge that he would protect the VDA from Ernst Bohle and the AO, Steinacher's position as leader of the VDA remained, at best, insecure. Lorenz's protection of the VDA against Bohle and the AO actually strengthened the VoMi's influence over the VDA. The dissension within the minorities which was fostered by Steinacher's leadership necessitated a change. "The established leadership, with a few exceptions, sided with Steinacher, whereas the younger elements and dissidents generally favoured his removal."⁴⁴ Since rival German groups within various minority groups could upset Germany's relations with their host country, it was necessary to pacify them. The Foreign Ministry demanded a resolution to the rivalries within the various minority groups. Fritz von Twardowski, the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, declared in his memorandum of 14 January 1937 that Steinacher's influence within the National Socialist party should either increase or "and this seems more expedient-

⁴³Aus der VDA-Arbeit, Steinacher, doc. no. 103, p. 391.

⁴⁴Lumans, p. 63.

Dr. Steinacher must be replaced by another person who enjoys the confidence of the Party offices concerned."⁴⁵ Twardowski advocated Steinacher's removal and he desired that Steinacher be replaced by a reliable Nazi Party member. Similar reasoning had previously led to the appointment of Otto von Kursell as Karl Haushofer's replacement as the leader of the reformed VR. Twardowski continued in his memorandum of 14 January 1937 by outlining the changes he believed should be effected within the VDA. "From the Foreign Ministry's point of view it should be insisted that the VDA must concern itself *exclusively* with cultural affairs and that, in the interests of the foreign policy of the German Reich, it must refrain from any kind of political propaganda, in particular from propaganda which contains only a hint of irredentism."⁴⁶ There was no longer any question of Steinacher's removal; it was now immanent.

The immediate pretext that led to Steinacher's dismissal from the leadership of the VDA was VDA's activities in the South Tyrol. During Benito Mussolini's visit to Germany between 25-29 September 1937, Mussolini warned Hermann Göring that if the belligerent activities of the Volksdeutsche in the South Tyrol

⁴⁵Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 14 January 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 141, p. 289.

⁴⁶Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, 14 January 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, no. 141, p. 289.

continued, German-Italian relations would surely suffer.⁴⁷ Steinacher himself referred to Mussolini's visit as the catalyst for his dismissal. "Dieser Mussolini-Besuch war auch für meinen weiteren Lebensweg entscheidend."⁴⁸ The aims of the Volksdeutsche in the South Tyrol would, therefore, have to be subordinated in order that Hitler's relations with Mussolini would remain on good terms. Mussolini's support was necessary for Hitler's designs in Austria; Italy was necessary for the Anschluß. Although the VDA's activities in the South Tyrol served as the pretext for Steinacher's dismissal, it was most likely Steinacher's inability to sufficiently Nazify the VDA that essentially sealed his fate.

Steinacher first heard of his immanent dismissal on 14 October 1937; "[a]m 14. 10.[1937] hörte ich aus der Kulisse, ein Brief von Hess werde kommen."⁴⁹ Five days later, on 19 October 1937, Steinacher was officially relieved by Hess as leader of the VDA. In a letter dated 19 October 1937, Hess provided Steinacher with two reasons for his dismissal. The first reason Hess provided concerning Steinacher's dismissal was Lorenz's complaint that Steinacher had not coordinated the VDA on the scale previously agreed upon in April 1937:

1. Parteigenosse Obergruppenführer Lorenz hat mir gemeldet, daß Sie Abmachungen, welche zwischen ihm und Ihnen getroffen wurden, nicht

⁴⁷Jacobsen, Außenpolitik, p. 249.

⁴⁸Das Ende: Meine 'Beurlaubung', in Steinacher, no. 106, p. 412.

⁴⁹Das Ende: Meine 'Beurlaubung', in Steinacher, no. 106, pp. 412-413.

eingehalten haben, insbesondere hinsichtlich Personaländerungen im VDA und hinsichtlich der Genehmigungspflicht von Reisen von VDA-Mitarbeitern ins Ausland.⁵⁰

The second reason Hess provided Steinacher concerning his dismissal was his activities in the South Tyrol. Hess wrote that despite the previous warnings, most notably Lorenz's warning of April 1937, Steinacher and the VDA continued to follow a policy that was counter to Hitler's conciliatory policy towards the region:

2. Der VDA hat trotz aller Beanstandungen und trotz aller Verwarnungen hinsichtlich Südtirols einen Kurs fortgesetzt, der im Gegensatz steht zu der Politik des Führers. Der letzte Fall dieser Art ist die Rede des (inzwischen beurlaubten) Regierungspräsidenten Leister in Köslin. Der Bundesleiter des VDA ist für derartige Vorkommnisse verantwortlich.⁵¹

Hess saved mentioning Steinacher's dismissal until his third and final point: "3. Bis zum Abschluß der in obigen Punkten eingeleiteten Untersuchung sind Sie von der Leitung des VDA beurlaubt."⁵² Steinacher's dismissal was publicized in a circular of 1 November 1937 to the missions in Warsaw, Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, Copenhagen, Kovno, Tallinn, Riga, Prague and Vienna. Dr. Wilhelm Luig, the Deputy Chief of Staff to Behrends, was temporarily named as Steinacher's replacement as leader of the VDA. In this circular of 1 November 1937, however, only one reason was provided regarding Steinacher's dismissal:

⁵⁰Rudolf Hess to Hans Steinacher, 19 October 1937, in *Das Ende: Meine Beurlaubung*, in Steinacher, no. 106, p. 413.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 413.

*Solely for your information I would observe, regarding the reason for the suspension, that the reproach is being levelled against Dr. Steinacher that under his leadership the VDA- instead of confining itself to its real task, the spiritual and cultural fostering of the German communities abroad- has consistently pursued a policy which was not in accordance with the Führer's foreign policy line.*⁵³

Steinacher attempted to alter Hess's decision regarding his dismissal by answering his argument point by point. He also sent letters to Adolf Hitler, Interior Minister Frick and Foreign Minister von Neurath in order to plead his case. From the Reich Chancellery, Steinacher received the message: "[t]he Führer has cognizance. He does not intend to decide in the matter."⁵⁴ Although Steinacher was not able to reverse Hess's decision regarding his dismissal, Steinacher did convince Hess that Dr. Luig should not permanently head the VDA. He argued that Luig, due to his position within the SS, would compromise the VDA in foreign countries.⁵⁵ Steinacher's last triumph, therefore, occurred when Hess commissioned Fritz Behagel as the permanent leader of the VDA on 15 March 1938.

Although Steinacher's dismissal essentially completed the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations, two further decrees from 1938 and 1939 respectively solidified the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations. Adolf Hitler declared in a secret directive on 2 July 1938 that the VoMi was charged with

⁵³Circular of the Foreign Ministry, 1 November 1937, in D.G.F.P., Series C, vol. VI, doc. no. 576, p. 1097.

⁵⁴Smelser, p. 202.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 202.

the uniform organization of all state and party offices that dealt with the Volksdeutsche. The VoMi was empowered to distribute all funds that were allocated to the various German communities abroad. Finally, and most important, Hitler declared that the consent of the VoMi was needed before any substantial decisions were taken or any substantial sum of money was spent on the Volksdeutsche.

Ich beauftrage die Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle mit der einheitlichen Ausrichtung sämtlicher Staats- und Parteistellen sowie mit dem einheitlichen Einsatz der in sämtlichen Stellen zur Verfügung stehenden Mittel für Volkstums- und Grenzlandfragen (deutsche Minderheiten jenseits und fremdvölkische Minderheiten diesseits der Grenzen).

Vor wichtigen Entscheidungen und Ausgaben größerer Mittel auf dem vorbezeichneten Gebiet ist die Zustimmung der Volksdeutschen Mittelstelle einzuholen.⁵⁶

The VoMi, originally a party organization, henceforth possessed state authority over the Volksdeutsche. Despite the VoMi's authority over both state and party organizations, the VoMi's powers over the various state organizations was not absolute. The state organizations involved with the Volksdeutsche required only the VoMi's consent for any changes they proposed. Hitler left the delineation of "state authority in *Volkstum* matters ambiguous enough to ensure his position as the supreme arbiter among quarrelling subordinates trying to sort things out."⁵⁷

The VoMi's responsibility to supervise all financial allocations to the

⁵⁶Adolf Hitler, Decree of 2 July 1938, PA AA Inland IIgeheim, Bd. 214.

⁵⁷Lumans, p. 67.

Volksdeutsche was an extremely important power. Although the VoMi's consent over any expended sum was mandatory, the VoMi never possessed powers of enforcement.⁵⁸ In an attempt to obtain greater powers in the financial field, Lorenz and Behrends attempted to gain influence within the various financial institutions that handled the allocation of funds to the Volksdeutsche.

In early July, Behrends secured a place on the board of directors of OSSA which was an agency that was founded in 1926 and was controlled by the Reich government. The OSSA engaged in financing and promoting German economic interests in territories with German minorities.⁵⁹ On 3 March 1939, Behrends secured for himself a position on the board of directors of the Deutsche Stiftung, the official organization which provided funds for the Volksdeutsche. Behrends' membership on these two organizations did not, however, secure control over Volksdeutsche financial affairs since the money did not originate from these organizations. The money originated "with other offices of the state, party, and private sector, including the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Finance, the Four Year Plan Office, and the Reich Currency Management Office."⁶⁰ Since the VoMi had no control over the amounts that were allotted to

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁹Roland Smelser, "The Betrayal of a Myth: National Socialism and the Financing of Middle Class Socialism in the Sudetenland", in Central European History, vol. 5, no. 3 (1972), pp. 256-277, p. 274.

⁶⁰Lumans, p. 67.

the Volksdeutsche, their powers originated only through the allocation of the funds. The VoMi's control over the allocation of funds, however, increased their influence among the various minority groups who were dependant upon the Reich subsidies. In exchange for subsidies, the VoMi could insist that the group they were subsidizing adopt a pro-Nazi attitude.

The final act completing the Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations appeared in a Circular Decree from the Interior Ministry on 29 March 1939. Wilhelm Frick, the Reich Minister of the Interior, defined the status of the Volksdeutsche.

(1) The term 'deutscher Volkszugehöriger' (member of the German race) [...] and the term 'Volksdeutscher' [...] both refer to members of the German race; they only differ insofar as the terms 'deutscher Volkszugehöriger' comprises Germans as well as foreign citizens, whereas 'Volksdeutsche' are only members of the German race of foreign citizenship.

(2) All who call themselves members of the German race are deutsche Volkszugehörige as long as this claim is confirmed by certain facts such as language, education, culture etc....[sic.] Persons of alien races, especially Jews, can never be deutsche Volkszugehörige even though they may have hitherto described themselves as such.⁶¹

With this decree of 29 March 1939, Frick declared that both the Reich Germans and the Volksdeutsche comprised the German Volk. Frick's "definition stopped just short of making the *Volksdeutsche* official Reich citizens."⁶² Had Reich citizenship

⁶¹Circular Decree of 29 March 1939, in Case VIII, Reel 26, Defense Document Books, Greifelt Document Book I, Doc. No. 63, p. 13.

⁶²Lumans, p. 72.

been granted, Hitler's foreign policy aims would have been greatly complicated. Germany's recognition of the Volksdeutsche as part of the German Volk, however, would enable Germany to use the Volksdeutsche in the name of the German Reich. It was a method of eliminating Volksdeutsche's ties towards their host country.

The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations was a long and complicated process. The necessity of retaining the Germandom organizations was initially essential following Hitler's ascension to power on 30 January 1933. Once their existence was no longer necessary, the National Socialist Germandom organizations began to assume complete control over the field of Germandom. The decreasing influence of the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations coincided with the fall of the conservative members within Hitler's cabinet. Hitler's need to retain Foreign Minister von Neurath, War Minister Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg and the Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch no longer existed following the Hossbach Conference of 5 November 1937. Neurath's, Blomberg's and Fritsch's open criticism of Hitler's foreign policy aims on 5 November 1937 provided Hitler with an opportunity to relieve them from their offices. There was no question that their replacements would be more sympathetic to Hitler and his aims. The conservatives were no longer necessary in Hitler's cabinet. By 4 February 1938, Neurath, Blomberg and Fritsch had all been relieved of their posts and were replaced by men willing to blindly execute Hitler's bidding. Steinacher's dismissal from the leadership of the VDA on 27 October 1937 was no coincidence; his usefulness to the party had

expired. The functions of the VoMi following the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939 were, however, greatly altered. Himmler's control over the VoMi was assured on 7 October 1939 when Hitler commissioned Himmler:

- (1) to bring back those German citizens and ethnic Germans abroad who are eligible for permanent return to the Reich;
 - (2) to eliminate the harmful influence of such alien parts of the population as constitute a danger to the Reich and the German community;
 - (3) to create new German colonies by resettlement, and especially by the resettlement of German citizens and ethnic Germans coming back from abroad
- The Reichsführer-SS is authorized to give such general orders and to take such administrative measures as are necessary for the execution of these duties.⁶³

Himmler was appointed Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom.

For the direction and promulgation of the various orders, Himmler decided to establish the Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums or the RKFDV (The Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom). To head the RKFDV, Himmler named SS-Oberführer Ulrich Greifelt. The VoMi, according to Himmler's order, formed a section of the RKFDV and was charged to "bring in[to the Reich . ..] ethnic Germans."⁶⁴ Himmler's influence over the VoMi therefore became formalized following his commission to head the RKFDV.

⁶³Decree by the Führer and Reich Chancellor for the Consolidation of German Folkdom, 7 October 1939, NO-3075, in Robert L. Koehl, RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939-1945, (Cambridge, 1957), p. 247.

⁶⁴Führer Decree, orders of the Reich Commissioner, NO-3078, in Koehl, op. cit., p. 250.

Himmler's influence over the VoMi was, however, bound by the countries affected by the resettlement program. By February 1941, Himmler was without question "the Führer's man in charge (*Sachbearbeiter*) in this area."⁶⁵ Following Rudolf Hess's flight to Britain on 10 May 1941, Himmler's position as head over all Germandom affairs was assured. Martin Bormann, who succeeded Hess did not inherit Hess's powers in Germandom affairs and did not, therefore, pose a threat to Himmler in these matters. Himmler's increased powers gave him control not only over VoMi's resettlement programmes but also VoMi's activities regarding the Volksdeutsche. On 11 June 1941, Himmler elevated the status of both the RKFDV and the VoMi to that of an SS main office.⁶⁶ The VoMi's control over the Volksdeutsche also enabled Himmler, as his influence of the VoMi grew, to enlist willing members into the SS. One can view the VoMi, therefore, during the war years as a 'Fifth Column' organization.

The VoMi's activities from 1936-1939 were substantially different from its activities during the war. Although the activities of the VoMi during the war have been examined in some detail, its influence at coordinating the Germandom organizations in the Reich has not been adequately examined. The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations has, until now, only been examined in the larger contexts of the VoMi's activities during the war, the Sudeten problem and

⁶⁵Lumans, p. 136.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 137.

Germany's foreign policy from 1933-1938 as evidenced in Lumans's, Smelser's and Jacobsen's works. While many published documents exist covering the Gleichschaltung of the German organizations, one can only hope that further scholarship will definitively examine and analyze this little studied aspect of the Third Reich.

Conclusion

The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations was a long and complicated process. The necessity of retaining the Germandom organizations was initially essential following Hitler's ascension to power on 30 January 1933. Once the existence of the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations was no longer necessary, the National Socialist Germandom organizations began to assume complete control over the field of Germandom. The decreasing influence of the non-National Socialist Germandom organizations coincided with the fall of the conservative members within Hitler's cabinet. Hitler's need to retain Foreign Minister von Neurath, War Minister Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg and the Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General Werner Freiherr von Fritsch no longer existed following the Hossbach Conference of 5 November 1937. Neurath's, Blomberg's and Fritsch's open criticism of Hitler's foreign policy aims on 5 November 1937 provided Hitler with an opportunity to relieve them from their offices. There was no question that their replacements would be more sympathetic to Hitler and his aims. The conservatives were no longer necessary in Hitler's cabinet. Dr. Hans Steinacher's dismissal from the leadership of the VDA on 27 October 1937 was no coincidence; his usefulness to the party had expired.

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The Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations was a long and complicated process. As in all other aspects of society in Germany, non-National Socialist organizations were allowed to continue until they were no longer necessary. Although numerous documents and secondary works have been published about the Germandom organizations, not enough emphasis has been placed upon the Gleichschaltung of these organizations. Only now is the

³Lumans, p. 136.

⁴Ibid., p. 137.

Gleichschaltung of the Germandom organizations receiving the scholarly attention it is due. Still not enough is known, however, about these organizations which were influenced by the highest ranking National Socialist leaders. One can only hope that further scholarship will definitively examine and analyze this surprisingly neglected aspect of the Third Reich.

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