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Nazism in the Eyes of German Social Democracy

RICHARD BREITMAN

A campaign poster used by the Social Democratic party of Germany (SPD) in 1932 displays a muscular worker with a hammer raised over his head. In front of him, as if mounted on an anvil, is a three-dimensional swastika, one segment of which has already split off. The intent expression on the worker's face and the posed hammer make it plain that he intends to demolish the swastika beneath him. This picture reflected the political self-image of the SPD in 1932, not its political behavior. For a variety of reasons, the SPD was unable to devise an effective strategy to combat nazism in 1932-1933.

Most scholars who have written on the SPD at the end of the Weimar Republic take the view that the SPD's long-term problems contributed substantially to its failure. The SPD and the socialist trade unions had accommodated themselves to the existing political, social, and economic order. Moreover, their leaders were suspicious of mass action. Left-wing critics argue that the Social Democrats had diluted their socialism too much; many non-Marxists believe that the SPD's revolutionary and class-conscious rhetoric frightened off nonsocialist parties and voters alike. But both sides agree that the SPD elite, protected in many ways from internal and external challenges, became too passive long before 1932.

In one respect, at least, the analysis has been incomplete. Much of the literature is concerned with the strength of the worker in that poster or with the hammer in his clenched hand. But did he know what to strike at? If not, why not? Would not his image of the swastika influence his choice of hammer and his angle of attack? Although there is some research on socialist and communist intellectuals' conceptions of fascism, there is very little work on the views of the SPD and the socialist unions. The period before 1930 is usually overlooked, and there is room
for further analysis of Social Democratic images of nazism even after that date. Such analysis may help to pinpoint which of the weaknesses of the Social Democratic movement were salient in 1932-1933, for errors in perception are sometimes the direct result of psychological defects. My hope is that this chapter will stimulate further research and discussion in this area.

Contrary to one recent claim that the SPD engaged in no real discussion, let alone analysis, of fascism during the 1920s and even into the 1930s, some party authorities saw a parallel between Italian Fascism and the extreme right in Germany as early as November 1922. Virulent nationalism and attacks against the democratic system, use of paramilitary forces for political purposes, and attempts to draw the working classes away from socialism established a pattern that the SPD could hardly ignore after Mussolini's successful march on Rome. Yet the Nazis were not the only German group to be labeled fascist. The Bavarian Social Democrats, for example, tended not to distinguish among the many folkish groups, even when the latter were quarreling among themselves. The most striking attribute of the Nazis seemed to be their description of themselves as a workers' party. Still, it is significant that on the occasion of the collapse of the Wirth government in November 1922, Rudolf Breitscheid warned the SPD Reichstag fraction that forcing new elections might lead to a fascist takeover of power. Thus, at least one important SPD deputy regarded the new right as a serious threat.

Earlier that month Bavarian party and union representatives had held a conference to discuss the danger of a Nazi putsch and the need for countermeasures. The delegates concluded that such a putsch would threaten not only Bavaria, but the entire Reich. However, they recommended against the establishment of a working-class security force unless it had government support. After the experience of early 1919, when left-wing radicals terrified many middle-class Bavarians and provoked a repression, SPD and General Federation of German Trade Union (ADGB) officials wished to avoid measures that would drive the middle classes to the right. One suggestion was that the printers, railway workers, and postal workers might quietly prepare to seal off any area affected by a Nazi putsch. The conference urged the Reich government to take stronger action against the Nazis, and Peter Grassmann, a member of the ADGB executive, sent the results of the meeting to SPD Cochairman Hermann Müller.

In early 1923 the ADGB executive asked local union organizations to supply information about the strength and composition of the Nazi movement, with particular attention to whether workers were joining the NSDAP. Most local respondents saw little evidence of workers deserting the socialist camp for the National Socialists. However, the returns indicated that the NSDAP was unusual in its ability to mobilize so many diverse groups:
former officers, students, young people, artisans, commercial employees, teachers, and civil servants. (One may conjecture that Social Democratic officials regarded this diverse constituency as a weakness, rather than as a source of strength.)

The two cities where the Nazis were apparently attracting substantial numbers of workers (although not socialists) were Munich (2,000) and Königsberg. In Munich the union correspondent noted that some former left-wing radicals from 1919 were now caught up in the Nazi movement. This comment was not the last Social Democratic observation that the Nazis and the Communists had overlapping support and a common cause. For both parties were opposed to the parliamentary-democratic system, to which the SPD had committed itself.

For the most part, however, SPD authorities linked the Nazis with other groups on the right. In April 1923 Hermann Müller-Brandenburg (SPD), Regierungsrat in the Thuringian Ministry of the Interior, assessed the battle strength of the various counterrevolutionary organizations, placing the NSDAP at the top of the list with 24,000 troops in Bavaria, Württemberg, and Thuringia. The total number of counterrevolutionary troops was estimated at 71,000, which outweighed the police forces of the reliably republican states. Müller-Brandenburg concluded that the position of the army would be decisive in any civil war and he urged further efforts to republicanize the military. Like the Bavarian Social Democrats previously, Müller did not recommend direct Social Democratic action against a right-wing coup. The state itself bore primary responsibility.

Despite the actions of the SPD-led Prussian government against the NSDAP, the Wilhelm Cuno government in the Reich refused to override the Bavarian government’s resistance to curbs on Nazi Storm Troops. The Bavarian Social Democrats reluctantly responded by forming their own centralized force, the Social Democratic Order Service (SOD), recruiting some six to seven thousand men to defend political meetings and conduct demonstrations. Initially, the force was unarmed, but it later acquired some weapons. The SPD’s reservations about this force are well illustrated by the offer to dissolve it if the Reich government would bring about the dissolution of Hitler’s SA. In September 1923 the Gustav Kahr government in Bavaria banned the SOD without touching the SA.

In the fall of 1923 a three-man Social Democratic delegation from Munich went to Berlin to warn the SPD ministers in the Stresemann government of the danger of a fascist coup in Bavaria. According to an account written much later by Wilhelm Roegner, one of the delegates, Finance Minister Rudolf Hilferding, agreed with their assessment and favored Reich intervention to arrest Hitler. However, Interior Minister Wilhelm Sollmann disagreed, for he was more concerned about the possibility of a coup in and around Berlin. In any case, the SPD ministers were unable
to persuade the cabinet to intervene against the will of the Bavarian government.

One consequence of the Reich's apparent inability to protect itself during 1923 was the decline of SPD opposition to a republican volunteer defense force. Otto Hörnig's emergency force in Magdeburg was expanded to 25,000, and in October Hörnig (SPD) made plans to supplement the efforts of the Reichswehr and Prussian police against a right-wing putsch. By early 1924 the SPD executive committee was willing to sanction the establishment of a new national organization along these lines. Its hope was that a republican organization, as opposed to a Social Democratic one, would not alienate the middle class. Eventually, the Reichsbanner Black-Red-Gold attained a membership of three million, but it was more effective in political marches and demonstrations than useful as a defense force.

In one respect, the Nazi Beer-Hall Putsch in Munich in November 1923 should have impelled the SPD to refine its view of nazism. The "reactionary" Bavarian government and police prevented the Nazis from achieving even the first step in their plan to seize control of Germany. Yet Social Democratic spokesmen continued to denounce the Bavarian government's lenient treatment of the Nazis before and after November 1923. SPD experts on nazism such as Wilhelm Hoegner placed more emphasis on the ties between the Nazis and the Right than on the differences. Rudolf Hilferding predicted at the SPD congress in 1924 that "the restoration of the monarchy would come first after the suppression of Social Democracy, of the republicans, and it would be supported by the illegal bands and death organizations, dripping blood and filth like Italian Fascism." Hilferding in effect turned nazism into an auxiliary force for the monarchists. Paul Kampffmeyer published a study in 1924 entitled "National Socialism and its Patrons." Although he accurately described Nazi ideology as racist and antidemocratic, he too lumped many of the SPD's foes together and stressed the Nazis turn to the bourgeoisie and particularly to heavy industry for support. The NSDAP had apparently failed as a working-class party and was seeking a new identity.

The Beer-Hall Putsch, the NSDAP's poor showing in the Reichstag election of December 1924 (3 percent), and the economic stabilization caused many SPD officials to dismiss German Fascism during the mid-1920s. In a 1925 speech Otto Nels derided the Nazis as folkish clowns. Rudolf Hilferding expressed some concern about fascism in his main address to the SPD congress in 1927, maintaining that the former struggle between the monarchy and the republic had been transformed into one between fascism and democracy. Yet Hilferding really argued that the traditional right (DNVP) had changed its direction; he had little to say about fascism itself as a
separate movement. Hilferding merely used the Italian example to lecture left-wing critics about what would occur if the German working class pursued only its economic interests and failed to defend democracy. Since fascism was a continuing threat, the SPD could not revert to its pre-1913 position of opposition to the political system.18

Hilferding also lauded the achievements of the SPD-led Prussian government in protecting the Weimar Republic.19 Prussia's record of dealing with the Nazis had been tougher than the Reich's. In late 1922 Prussian Interior Minister Carl Severing had banned the NSDAP under the terms of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, but Nazi reorganization maneuvers and subsequent court decisions blunted the effectiveness of this measure. On November 8–9, 1923, Severing mobilized the Prussian police in the event that a Nazi putsch succeeded in Munich.20 Nor did Prussia overlook the NSDAP thereafter. When Hitler gave a speech in Munich in 1925 in which he foresaw passing over the corpses of his enemies after he gained power, the Bavarian government imposed a ban on his speaking in public. Prussia quickly followed suit.21 An analysis of radical right-wing movements, written in early 1927 in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, emphasized the danger posed by the SA and urged further legal action against the NSDAP. Yet there were other voices within party ranks. SPD Reichstag deputy Kurt Rosenfeld recommended in 1927 that the speaking ban imposed on Hitler be lifted, and the SPD's central newspaper Vorwärts stated overconfidently: "It would please us if Hitler . . . were allowed to rave against the Jews, as he loves to do."22

SPD criticism of restrictions on civil liberties, along with the poor showing of the NSDAP in the 1928 Reichstag election (2.6 percent) may have induced Prussian Interior Minister Albert Grzesinski (SPD) to lift the speaking ban on Hitler in September 1928. The Interior Ministry actually issued a press release in which it stated that the Nazis no longer represented a serious danger to the Republic.23 Whether or not this statement is taken as sincere, even those who continued to show concern about the NSDAP focused only on its capability to carry out a putsch.24 Despite lifting the speaking ban on Hitler, Grzesinski urged Prussian Minister-President Otto Braun (SPD) and Reich Interior Minister Severing in December 1928 to ban both the Nazi and Communist paramilitary forces.25

Few inside the Social Democratic ranks perceived the significance of Nazi efforts during the mid-1920s to construct a strong political organization, develop new techniques of propaganda, and recruit new social groups. But as the Nazis gained strength in state, local, and student elections during 1929, and as the economy deteriorated, some SPD analysts took another look. However, Social Democratic disdain for nazism interfered with perception. One party brochure, for example, described the
Nazis as the successors of the anti-Semitic parties and the Pan-Germans. The Hitler movement was said to contain not a single new idea; it represented the hopes of social reactionaries and monarchists. Anti-Semitism was simply a reflection of Nazi economic stupidity. Although noting the NSDAP's ability to mobilize the rural and urban Mittelstand, another SPD writer described the Nazis as the tool of heavy industry. In early 1930 SPD Cochairman Otto Wels charged that capitalists and possibly foreign fascist nations were subsidizing the Nazis. Such historical analogies and cui bono reasoning were counterproductive, because they led SPD officials to underestimate the novelty and independence of the Nazi movement.

Better information was available by 1930. A detailed analysis of the NSDAP's finances, apparently written in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, discounted the significance of large donations. After breaking down NSDAP income from dues, public assemblies, and the press, the author observed: "It may be correct that various big businessmen such as Kirdorff, Hutschmann-Plauen /Sic/, and also some large landowners give substantial contributions. Even if these should reach the ten thousand level in individual cases, this would represent only a minor fraction of the total income of the party from its own sources." A few SPD officials were also complaining that the party as well as the Reich and Prussian governments were not active enough against corrosive Nazi propaganda. However, their proposed remedy, more vigorous use of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, was likely neither to be effective nor sufficient.

By mid-1930 some very perceptive commentators raised new concerns. In an article in the socialist journal Die Gesellschaft, Carl Mierendorff pointed out that, with a truly national organization, the Nazis were making substantial inroads among the middle class (Bürgerliche Mittelschichten): employees, small farmers, students, and in places, young workers. Mierendorff emphasized that the NSDAP had greatest success with previous nonvoters, many of whom were either indifferent to politics before or disgusted with it now. The colorful, emotional activities and language of the Nazis reached these alienated citizens, whereas the SPD's agitation assumed too much knowledge and insight on the part of the voters. Mierendorff doubted that the Nazis would fade away like the anti-Semitic parties of the Second Reich or collapse as the result of internal dissension; the SPD needed to campaign actively against them. Another report, again apparently from within the Prussian Interior Ministry, projected that an increase in Nazi parliamentary strength might lead to paralysis of the Reichstag and the various Landtage, which could only increase citizen disaffection for the political system. If the Nazis could gain access to the government, they might use their power to destroy the state and establish a dictatorship.

Despite these strikingly accurate forecasts, most Social Democratic observers took less alarmist views. Nazism was still
seen as a new form of conservatism supported by those social strata adversely affected by the process of economic concentration. Moreover, the parallel between Germany and Italy was not exact, because Germany was far more industrialized. That meant that the working class was stronger, the antimodern elements of the middle classes far weaker. Mussolini's Italy actually bore more resemblance to late-nineteenth-century Germany.33 Whereas Social Democrats had once feared nazism because of its efforts to recruit workers, the belief that its constituency was substantially petty bourgeois was reassuring. Nazism seemed to represent no long-term threat in Germany; it was the initial product of peculiar Bavarian conditions and was now spread by the economic crisis.34

The Reichstag election results of September 14, 1930, thus came as a colossal shock to most Social Democratic officials.35 The NSDAP's 6.4 million votes (18.7 percent) and 107 Reichstag seats not only established this party as the second largest behind the SPD; they also abruptly altered the SPD's conception of the danger. Julius Leber described in his memoirs the depression and helplessness of Social Democratic deputies faced with both the threatening flags of nazism and Communist victory cries as well. Even weeks after September 14, he said, the most inflexible pacifists in the SPD fraction walked through the halls of the Reichstag asking everyone whether the Reichswehr could be relied upon in case of a putsch.36 Carl Severing, once again Prussian interior minister, soon added to the gloom by telling the SPD executive committee that he doubted whether the Prussian police could maintain control in the event of a Nazi putsch and Communist opposition to a united front against nazism.37

Yet the possibility of a Nazi coup was no longer the only serious SPD concern. The problem now was not to recognize the danger; it was to figure out a method to deal with all of the dangers, including that of Nazi entrance into a coalition government in the Reich. Once again the SPD leaders looked first to the government itself for assistance. Lacking influence over President Hindenburg, the SPD's best hope was working with Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, a leader of the Center party. In October 1930 party officials concluded that Brüning's government represented the lesser evil, and the SPD began its controversial policy of toleration of Brüning.38

This policy rested on a number of judgments, most of which were not within the SPD's power to validate. First, the SPD had to decide that the defense of democracy against fascism was its highest priority. Second, the alternative to Brüning had to be a government that included Hitler. (This may not have been the only alternative.) Third, the chancellor had to be induced to cooperate with the SPD on some key issues; otherwise the party might lose too much support. Finally, the Prussian government had to maintain sufficient leverage to protect the Republic.
against a Nazi putsch. Although the SPD took the first step in October 1930, the other requisites of toleration were lacking.

The deepening depression and Brüning's misguided social and economic policies alienated the trade unions, the left wing of the party, and some others as well. The SPD's fear of losing mass support made it increasingly uncomfortable about tolerating Brüning. But to break with Brüning was to risk political isolation, not only in the Reich, but also in Prussia. The loss of its Prussian stronghold would have been a severe blow for the SPD. By the spring of 1931 the debate within the party over toleration became quite angry, and the death of Hermann Müller at the end of March deprived the SPD of its most skillful conciliator.

The party congress held in Leipzig at the end of May and in early June focused on fascism and the SPD's toleration policy. The party leadership tried to educate its critics about the nature and dangers of fascism, while defending the toleration policy. Left-wing spokesmen denounced the Brüning government and urged a more vigorous SPD policy inside and outside the Reichstag. The speeches and discussions at the congress indicated that a number of misconceptions about nazism prevailed on both sides.

After Otto Wels announced at the outset that the Nazis intended to restore the monarchy through terror and force, Rudolf Breitscheid, cochairman of the Reichstag faction and the best speaker in the party, analyzed nazism in his main address entitled "Overcoming Fascism." He pointed out that loose usage of the term "fascism," for example, describing Brüning's emergency ordinances as "fascist," only made the struggle against real fascism more difficult. He could not resist the comment, however, that there were many similarities between fascism and the political system in the Soviet Union. Perhaps this was a rejoinder to Communist attacks on the Social Democrats as "social fascists." Breitscheid's definition of fascism included overthrow of democracy, establishment of a dictatorship or privileged elite, and rejection of the demands of a class-conscious working class. He said that consciously or not, fascism served the interests of capitalism.

Breitscheid compared the development of fascism in Germany and Italy. The slower pace in Germany after the war he attributed to better organization of the rival parties (especially the working class) and greater public expectations of the new democratic system. Only after voters became disillusioned with the Weimar system and after the economic crises brought widespread suffering and resentment did fascism turn into a powerful mass movement. Breitscheid related Nazi ideology to antirationalist and anti-positivist currents, but he claimed that the lack of real theory and program in National Socialism represented a major weakness. When one considered the high level of industrialization in Germany, it seemed unlikely that fascism would endure there. But
the short-term threat at least was quite serious. Because of Nazi inroads on the nonsocialist parties, there was increasing danger of the Nazis gaining influence over the government and administration through legal political methods.

What is most striking about Breitscheid's presentation is what is missing: a detailed analysis of Nazi ideology, party structure, leadership, and methods. There were plenty of sources available, including Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. But Breitscheid did not use them, and his concept of fascism was extremely general. His omissions are all the more worthy of note in that he wished to convince the congress that the danger of fascism justified the SPD's toleration policy. Breitscheid's own uncertainties about the policy may account in part for his lack of forcefulness. But judging from his other remarks, one may also conclude that he still underestimated the danger of nazism and felt that the SPD could outlast it. Even the title of his address, "Overcoming Fascism" (Die Überwindung des Faschismus) has a slightly passive sound. One wonders whether an impassioned warning that a Nazi government would mean another world war would have had greater impact.

Yet Breitscheid's approach was sophisticated compared to that of Max Seydewitz and Ernst Eckstein, two of the Left opposition spokesmen. They argued that monopoly capitalism, fearing that it would not be able to obtain its objectives through the democratic system, had created fascism to pursue them more effectively. The Brüning government was also an instrument of capitalist interests. So the only real difference between fascism and Brüning was one of method; Brüning's policies were already fascist. Advocates of such views could not abide the SPD's toleration policy, and a number of the left-wing dissidents had already violated fraction discipline on votes in the Reichstag. They were soon expelled from the party, which led them to found the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany. Although another schism certainly did the Social Democratic movement no good, the SAPD did not become a significant force.

Wilhelm Sollmann also defended the Reichstag fraction's stance against the left-wing critics. He tried to show that the SPD's policy resulted directly from its own democratic principles and from the danger of a legal takeover of power by the fascists. Yet Sollmann too had a tendency to deprecate the Nazis in such a way that his listeners might easily misperceive their intentions:

Adolf Hitler may be a very modest political brain, but in the twelve years of his political activity his capitalist donors have at least taught him, through extra-help sessions (Nachhilfestunden) that storm troops ... cannot overrun a modern state. ... The National Socialism which has grasped this appears to me to be a much greater danger than the ridiculous putschism of 1923.
Even though Sollmann argued that the SPD's only choice was between Brüning and a fascist dictatorship a thousand times worse, his audience got little sense of precisely why nazism was so dangerous. To know that it was directed against the working class and parliamentary democracy was enough reason to oppose it.

Yet from within the Social Democratic camp Alexander Schifrin had already analyzed the autocratic, militaristic, demagogic, and neonationalist elements of nazism; he underestimated only anti-Semitism. Moreover, Schifrin had commented astutely on the authoritarianism of the movement and noted that its social composition did not determine its goals and policies. Nazism was neither simply a technique nor a congeries of social strata. A number of socialist intellectuals to the left of the SPD also wrote perceptively about nazism in the early 1930s. Little of this analysis seems to have reached the party elite.

Otto Landsberg's comments in early 1931 were not atypical of the SPD's upper ranks. Landsberg saw a difference between the Nazis and reactionaries. The Nazis were more violent and would certainly repress their opponents more thoroughly if they gained power. But the reactionaries were in some ways more dangerous, because it was unlikely that the Nazis could maintain power.

The tendency to compare its present enemies with its past enemies was strong in a movement that regarded itself as having history on its side. But lack of understanding of nazism's unique features and its psychological impact upon the public hindered the SPD from adopting proper countermeasures earlier, including effective political agitation. Previous SPD concerns that nazism might become a rival working-class movement led to constant denunciations of the NSDAP as the tool of capitalism. Such attacks hardly sufficed to win middle-class voters away from nazism. By late 1932 Wilhelm Sollmann himself recognized one basic cause of the problem: "We would have been spared many a surprise, the sudden onset of the brown flood of nazism being not the last, if our eyes and ears had reached far enough outside the ranks of our organization and our loyal followers." The Social Democratic movement's delayed reaction to nazism was linked directly to the former's insularity and the latter's willingness to exploit the resentments of diverse groups.

Even after the danger had been perceived, the SPD worked primarily to keep the proletariat away from Nazism. It was hard for the party to shift gears, particularly during the depression. Many Social Democrats felt that the nonsocialist parties would have to do their part with the rest of the electorate, at least until the economic crisis abated. Otto Wels proclaimed at the SPD congress in 1931: "Part of the German middle class may, like cowards, bow to fancy oratory; large landowners, heavy industrialists, bank and stock market kings
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and all such royalty may turn to this workers' party /the NSDAP/; the German workers' party is and will be German Social Democracy, and it will prevail. - Rather than demean those who were attracted to nazism, Wehls might have tried to recruit some of them.

But the SPD's toleration policy placed it in a position where it could offer little in the way of alternatives. Even antifascist activity was less than vigorous. Only at the end of 1931 did the party leadership reluctantly sanction the establishment of the Iron Front, an antifascist umbrella organization of Social Democratic and Reichsbanner forces. Even then the Iron Front, like the Reichsbanner, failed to develop a significant military capability, partly because of the SPD leadership's opposition. Nor were there specific plans to coordinate the work of the volunteer forces with the Prussian police, although the idea had long been broached. All extraparliamentary efforts, particularly those involving the use of force or the threat to use force, were rejected because they might drive Brűning and the nonsocialist parties into the arms of the Nazis. But with Brűning excluding the Reichstag from decision making, the SPD could hardly make use of its parliamentary strength. Franz von Papen's Staatsstreich against the Prussian government on July 20, 1932, left the SPD in a cul-de-sac. Deprived of its governmental stronghold, the SPD simply waited for an end to the depression and hoped for the best.

Social Democratic passivity during 1932-1933 was not the product of bureaucratization and inadequate leadership alone. It was also the result of a Weltanschauung that forecast eventual victory over the foes of socialism and made it hard to distinguish among those foes. The SPD accurately considered nazism as one expression of a broader European current called fascism. But the party's concept of fascism neither explained nazism sufficiently nor provided a clear sense of the differences between fascists and reactionaries. Something could be learned from a comparison of Hitler and Mussolini. But to compare Hitler with Wilhelmi II was ridiculous.

Given the difficult strategic situation of the Weimar Republic's last year, the SPD could not deal with all the dangers facing itself and the parliamentary democratic system. It chose to protect its working-class base and to avoid risky experiments, not realizing that inaction itself carried major risks. Such thinking allowed the Social Democrats to disclaim responsibility for the rise of nazism, but it did not prevent the Nazi triumph.
NOTES

I am indebted to Margaret Anderson for her criticism of a draft of this essay.

1 Wahlplakat 249, Stadtarchiv Mannheim.


4 Ernst Nolte, "Vierzig Jahre Theorien über den Fascismus,"


7 Notes of SPD Reichstag fraction, November 13, 1922, Nachlass Carl Giebel II/221.

8 Aussprache Über die politische Lage in Bayern, November 3, 1922, Restakten des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, August-Bebel-Institut (hereafter ADGB-ABI), NB 64/0007a; Peter Grassmann to Herrmann Müller, November 9, 1922, ADGB-ABI, NB 64/0003; Adolf Braun memo, November 17, 1922, ADGB-ABI, NB 54/0010.

9 ADGB-ABI, NB 54/0033-0043.

10 Copy in Nachlass Carl Severing, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, M 70/13.


12 Wilhelm Hoegner, Der schwierige Aussenseiter: Erinnerungen eines Abgeordneten, Emigranten und Ministerpräsidenten (Munich: Isar Verlag, 1959), p. 27.

13 Karl Rohe, Das Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbände zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966), especially pp. 40-43; James M. Diehl, Paramilitary Politics in
Towards the Holocaust

Weimar Germany (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 130-32. The popularity of the Communist-organized "proletarian hundreds" in Saxony and Thuringia also helped to bring about a change in the attitude of SPD leaders and the rank and file as well.

14 See the discussion of Hoegner's views by Peter Kritzer, Wilhelm Hoegner: Politische Biographie eines bayerischen Sozialdemokraten (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1979), pp. 52-58.


16 Paul Kampffmeyer, Der Nationalsozialismus und seine Gönner (Berlin: Dietz Nachfolger Verlag, 1924).


19 Ibid., p. 180.

20 Gotthard Jasper, Der Schutz der Republic: Studien zur staatlichen Sicherung der Demokratie in der Weimarer Republik (Tübingen: Mohr Verlag, 1963), pp. 139-46, 301-4; Carl Severing, Mein Lebensweg, (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 1950), vol. I, pp. 446-47.


23 Severing, Mein Lebensweg, I, p. 429.

24 Denkschrift Über die NSDAP /19287, Nachlass Grzesinski, IISH, B/X/1557.
Notes of December 12, 1923 meeting, Nachlass Grzesinski, IISH, B/IX/705; also Albert Grzesinski, Inside Germany (N.Y., 1939), p. 144.


Denkschrift Über die Finanzierung der NSDAP, Nachlass Grzesinski, IISH, B/X/1558.

Wilhelm Sollmann to Grzesinski, October 3, 1929, and Grzesinski to Sollmann, October 14, 1929, Nachlass Grzesinski, IISH B/X/1502 and B/X/1491.


Referentendenkschrift Über die NSDAP, May 1930, Nachlass Grzesinski, IISH B/X/1559. By this time Grzesinski had resigned as Prussian interior minister.


SPD, Kampf dem Hakenkreuz, p. 8.


See Hagen Schulze, Otto Braun oder Preussens demokratische Sendung: Eine Biographie (Frankfurt a.M.: Propylaen-Ullstein Verlag, pp. 637-41; Richard Breitman, German Socialism and

Rudolf Hilferding to Karl Kautsky, April 15, 1931, Nachlass Kautsky, III/III D/XII/652.


Ibid., pp. 37-108. See also his concluding remarks, pp. 169-70.

Breitman, German Socialism, pp. 145-46, 171.

SPD Parteitag 1931, pp. 125, 151.

On the SAPD, see Hanno Drechsler, Die Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAPD): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung am Ende der Weimarer Republik (Heisenheim am Berg: Hain Verlag, 1965).

SPD Parteitag 1931, p. 114.

Ibid., p. 115.


Rohe, Das Reichsbanner, pp. 365-79, 403-17.

Landsberg, Die politische Krise, p. 18.